

More than Just a Rapper: Mainstream and Alternative Media's Depiction of Nipsey Hussle

By Jonathan Joshua Hazlewood

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Abstract

Mainstream and alternative media depict individuals differently from one another. In stories covering African American rappers and homicide victims, mainstream and alternative stories use images, phrases, and people to portray certain ideas to their audience. In terms of mainstream news outlets, stories associate criminality onto African American homicide victims and rappers through labeling them as brutes, focusing on the crimes they commit, and highlighting criminal associations (Aquil, 2018; Cochran, 2015; Dukes & Gaither 2018; Wright & Washington, 2019). While alternative outlets have offered sympathetic and well-rounded representations that depict the life, personal accomplishments, and good deeds of an African American victim (Irene, Deckard, & Rodriguez, 2016). Using a Social Constructionist lens, this thesis examines alternative and mainstream media's depiction of Nipsey Hussle. The goal of this paper was to determine if narratives and labels used with African American homicide victims and rappers are present in the media's depiction of Nipsey Hussle. From the findings, I found mainstream and alternative outlets to align with their standard presentations of African Americans and show new ways a rapper can be depicted.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Nipsey Hussle also known as Ermias Joseph Asghedom was an African American rapper born in Los Angeles, California (Milca, 2019). The California based rapper ascended from being a local gang member to a globally recognized figure in hip-hop, his local community, and the entrepreneurial world. However, all that was cut short, on March 31st, 2019, when Nipsey Hussle was shot and killed in front of his Marathon Clothing Store. According to multiple media sources, Nipsey Hussle was outside of his store when a man by the name of Eric Holder approached him (ABC News, 2019a; Breakfastclub, 2019a, Complex, 2019a; Maxouris, 2019). Reports claimed that both Nipsey Hussle and Eric Holder got into a verbal altercation early in the morning (CBS, 2019a; Breakfast Club, 2019a; Deerwester 2019; Galbraith, 2019; Maxouris, 2019). People on the scene claimed that Nipsey Hussle asked Eric Holder to leave his premises and Mr. Holder did as such. After a few hours, Eric Holder returned to the Marathon Clothing Store with a handgun and opened fire, shooting two individuals, and killing Nipsey Hussle (CBS, 2019; Maxouris, 2019; Milca, 2019).

The purpose of this study was to systematically assess the different media portrayals arising from his death. After Nipsey Hussle was killed, mainstream and alternative media sources began creating videos and articles constructing who Nipsey Hussle was. Within these articles and videos, authors discussed topics ranging from Nipsey's community initiatives, upbringing in Los Angeles, relationships, and business ventures (Henderson, 2019; Real, Coscarelli & Chokshi 2019; Slotnik, 2019). Media outlets started to incorporate what others had to say on the matter. Professional basketball players such as LeBron James, Steph Curry, and Russel Westbrook, as well as popular music artists Drake, Beyoncé, Kendrick Lamar, and Diddy, along with, Los Angeles's Police Commissioner and Mayor made statements regarding his

murder (Henderson, 2019). With so many ideas being brought forth about Nipsey Hussle and having high profiled individuals speaking about his life, this case serves as an excellent example to study media's depiction of rappers.

Examining media coverage of Nipsey Hussle leads to a greater discussion regarding Criminology and hip-hop. Within the context of Criminology, the case of Nipsey Hussle addresses issues surrounding the significance and the social impact of hip-hop. Hip-Hop has always been, "a bold form of oppositional culture in protest and condemnation of perceived racial formation, institutional discrimination, and urban decay in the inner cities" (Martinez, 1997, p.266). Whether it was KRS ONE or Tupac, criminologists have studied rap and its messages (Wells-Wilbon & Schiele, 2010). Despite existing Criminological research about rap and its artists, I believe there is a lack of research in hip-hop and how scholars examine the social significance of an artist's life and career. Despite scholars examining rappers in media, the ways they have been covered are limited to certain sources and depictions (Combs, 2014). For example, most studies have only examined rappers as criminals and deviants in the media (Combs, 2014). Since rappers are primarily seen and studied through a negative lens, rappers and rap music have been systemically excluded in Criminological literature. I believe this study addresses such gaps. Through examining the case of Nipsey Hussle, I will make advancements by contrasting a sympathetic outlet in the form of alternative outlets with mainstream outlets. In addition to advancing the field of Criminology, I intend on contributing towards a Critical Race Theory perspective. This study is designed to identify and assess the narratives used to describe African American rappers in media. Aligning with the Critical Race paradigm will reveal the many patterns to which minorities are exploited, stereotyped, and mistreated in the media

(Bragg, 2010). With this study I determined if these patterns are present with the portrayal of Nipsey Hussle.

Despite this study focusing on media's depiction of Nipsey Hussle, it acknowledges anti-black racism and gendered violence of African Americans. Studies involving African Americans state that Black bodies are trapped in an endless cycle of violence (Crichlow & Lauricella, 2018; Smiley & Fakunle 2016). In North America, systemic and structural racism against African Americans has been engrained in society. Media has become a platform that ensconces the Black identity with crime, poverty, and violence (Crichlow 2009, 2014). In many occurrences, mainstream media constantly depict African Americans in connection to violent crimes such as assault, murder, and robbery (Oliver, 2003). As a result of these negative portrays, mass media outlets exaggerate the negative perception of African Americans (Crichlow & Lauricella, 2018) and use African American bodies as their scapegoat for all problems (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). When mainstream media focuses on very graphic offenses such as robbery, murder, and drug dealing, they are associating the structural, systemic, and social conditions in which poor African Americans are exposed to as individual traits (Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). The appropriation of Blackness to social problems and violent criminality from media, "reveals the hypocrisy and the arrogance of dominant groups to control or determine what is deemed normal/abnormal, as well as what is deemed legitimate, acceptable, or valid" (Dei, 2018, p.120).

The cycle of violence is made prevalent when African American males are presented in the media. According to Wesley Crichlow (2014), African American males have become victims and participants of interpersonal-structural violence. Due to African Americans being pushed to impoverished urban centers and suffering from unequal treatment, they have a greater likelihood of committing violent acts (Crichlow 2014; Crichlow & Lauricella 2018). Structural inequities

such as impoverished living areas, over-policing, racial profiling, and violence on a day to day basis, have enabled young African American men to fall victim to crime and commit violent acts. When African American men commit these violent acts, media outlets negatively stereotype them as savages and animals (Welsey, 2014). Such depictions according to Dei (2018), cause society to view African Americans men as criminals, ignore structural and systemic issues that plague the Black community, and reinforces norms that cause African American men to behave violently.

The structural violence to which African American bodies face has become an important discussion in North America. With African American victims being negatively portrayed in media and instances of African Americans being killed by police, many movements have risen to combat the narratives associated with them (Crichlow & Lauricella, 2018). Within recent years, movements such as BlackLivesMatter (BLM) and the rise of African Americans in academia has led to recognizing the mistreatment of Black bodies and the dismantling of anti-black racism (Hatter, 2020). As a result of these movements, studies involving the media's depiction of African Americans have typically focused on portraying them in a positive manner (Welsey & Lauricella, 2018; Hatter, 2020). Whether it is challenging the notion that African Americans are inherently violent or focusing on the good they do for others, this new social wave has made a significant impact on their depiction (Hatter, 2020). This paper is primarily focussed on the case of Nipsey Hussle and does not specifically engage, by intention, with gendered constructions of black identity or BLM, but rather serves to address undue tropes about the systemic and heteronormative prejudices applied to African American men.

These approaches fall into a Social Constructionism paradigm that critically considers the role of images, language, and people presented in media and how they affect their audience's perceptions (Surette, 2019). In terms of mainstream and alternative media, Social Constructionism has been used by scholars to show different depictions and narratives associated with African Americans and rappers. Within the context of mainstream news, past studies have found mainstream media outlets to negatively portray and problematize African Americans (Dukes & Gaither, 2018; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Wright & Washington, 2019). In many news stories covering African American homicide victims, mainstream media have assigned responsibility to an African American victim for their own demise. The criminalization of African American bodies extends to living rappers (Dukes & Gaither, 2018; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Wright & Washington, 2019). Mainstream outlets highlight a rapper's criminal history, associations, and promote them advocating violence. Such ideas form a popular perception of hip-hop artists as either gang members or inherently criminal (Aquil, 2018). With mainstream media blaming African Americans for their demise and promoting rappers as deviants, such outlets misrepresent them to appear hostile and lacking innocence (Wright & Washington, 2019).

Alternative media outlets are known to depict African Americans differently. In many cases, alternative media formats connect African American homicide victims to systemic issues in society (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). By connecting the event to issues such as racism and discrimination, alternative media brings greater awareness to social issues, humanizes victims, and allows for fair representation (Costa Gama, 1998; Headley, 1983; Johnson & Dixon, 2008). Despite media outlets' differential depiction of African Americans, both mainstream and alternative media have been found to positively highlight a dead African American rapper's

accomplishments and while disregarding all negative coverage (Combs, 2014). Given Nipsey Hussle's background, this study will consider how certain portrayals of African American homicide victims and rappers were employed in media's dialogue surrounding his untimely death.

Ultimately, I employed a Social Constructionism frame to assess the differences and similarities in mainstream and alternative stories covering Nipsey Hussle (Surette, 2019). By examining the language, frames, and images used, I determined what perspectives were seen and how the audience could be perceiving the events (Berger & Luckman, 1966; McQuail, 2005; Surette, 2014). This study will extend the Critical Race discussion regarding the distorted portrayal of African Americans and rappers in mainstream and alternative media outlets (Singer, 2009). With Nipsey Hussle's murder being a high-profile case, examining the way the media covered his death provides new insight into how African Americans and rappers are constructed in the news. This study adopts a qualitative comparative analysis of online articles and videos in mainstream news and pop-culture outlets. In this analysis, I examined what ideas and labels were used in mainstream and alternative outlets to determine any similarities or differences in these sources. By examining Nipsey Hussle in relation to mainstream and pop-culture media outlets, I answered 3 questions.

Research Questions

- 1) How was the death of a hip-hop artist portrayed in mainstream and pop-culture media formats?
- 2) Is the negative stigma surrounding hip-hop artists present with Nipsey Hussle?
- 3) Who are the claims-makers and what type of information they are using to describe Nipsey Hussle?

To address these research questions, this thesis is broken into several chapters. Chapter two of this thesis will include a fully developed literature review. In this section, I discuss media in the field of Criminology. By examining media, I examine the concepts of othering, Social Constructionism, and claims-makers. Such ideas lead to a detailed analysis of how African Americans have been constructed in the media and how such constructions impact a rapper's depiction in media.

Chapter three detailed my methodologies. This chapter included the criteria I used to collect sources, how I coded the information, and how I analyzed mainstream and alternative sources. Ultimately, I used a qualitative comparative analysis to examine first week stories covering Nipsey Hussle in mainstream and pop-culture articles and videos.

Chapters four, five, and six will go over what frames, images, and claims-makers were found and how they were presented among mainstream and alternative outlets. Through the research, it was found that mainstream and alternative outlets both upheld standard depiction of African Americans and rappers while introducing new perspectives.

Chapter seven then went on to show my analysis/discussion section. In this section, I analyzed and compared the information seen in mainstream and alternative media outlets with one another. Throughout this chapter, I was able to use my findings to answer the research questions I stated at the beginning of the paper, while addressing my limitations and areas for future studies.

Lastly, my paper ends with my conclusion. In this section I reiterated the purpose of this study and advocated the continuation of Criminology's involvement in the study of hip-hop and African Americans.

Chapter 2

Literature Review:

The ethnicity of an individual will greatly affect how they are portrayed in the media.

Research investigating the portrayal of African Americans in the media supports a predominately negative narrative, even of homicide victims (Combs, 2014; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Payne, 2014; Wright & Washington, 2018). To illustrate this, the following literature review will discuss several concepts. First, this literature review will examine the media's role in Criminology and the othering of African Americans. Followed by a discussion about Social Constructionism and claims-makers in the media. After analyzing Social Constructionism and the concept of claims-makers, the distinction between alternative and mainstream media will be examined. This will then lead to a discussion about the claims and narratives that claims-makers make regarding African Americans in mainstream and alternative media. The review then shifts to specific portrayals of African American homicide victims in mainstream and alternative media. This literature review will then conclude with a discussion contrasting media's depiction of living and dead African American rappers while addressing limitations in the research.

Media and Criminology

Crime and Othering

Media has been found to impact the public's perception of crime and social issues. According to Barak (1994), people use the media as a proxy for things outside of their own experiences. Crime and justice issues are popular subject matters in media and are heavily reported on (Barak, 1994; Greer & Jewkes, 2005; Hunt, 1997). When discussing the issue of crime, scholars have found media outlets to create polarizing and negative depictions of those involved (Greer & Jewkes 2005; Hunt, 1997). According to the work of Edward Said (2003/1978), society categorizes, separates, and subordinates' groups by labeling them "the other".

Through the process known as “othering”, Greer and Jewkes (2005) explain that the media’s reliance on exceptional offenses such as assault and murder creates fear and stigmatization towards the people involved. By focusing on rare crimes, media constructs those who commit these crimes as “outsiders” (Greer & Jewkes 2005; Hunt, 1997). This “othering” creates the perception that such people are detached from the social, cultural, and moral reality that society occupies in (Greer & Jewkes, 2005). Baffoe (2012) supports such claims when analyzing stories involving members from Black communities and crime. According to the study, Canadian and American media outlets are more likely to label and claim that they were troublemakers and, “unwanted outsiders who undermined the Canadian and American way of life” (Baffoe, 2012, p.47).

When the media constantly creates a negative association or “others” African Americans, it leads to an outstanding fear of minorities (Cohen, 2004 & Garland, 2008). Capitalizing on these constructed fears, powerful media institutions will portray these individuals as “folk devils” and promote stories that trigger additional fears and beliefs (Cohen, 2004 & Garland, 2008). For example, in instances of gun violence and gun homicides, stories would frequently highlight the perpetrator as young, ethnic, and male, to link them to crime and to shape the public’s perception (Garland, 2008). Due to how the media subordinate and categorize minority groups as criminals they establish them to be the “other” (Garland, 2008). By making these groups as the “other”, it creates a panic where people have a fear associated with certain demographics and reinforce certain stereotypes (Garland, 2008).

Media outlets are complicit in developing polarizing and negative depictions of African American. As explained by Nunnally (2010), “being labeled “African American,”..., implies having an ancestral and historical connection to U.S. slavery, segregation, and racial

discrimination” (p. 337). In the case of crimes committed by African Americans against other African Americans, Oliver (2003) found media to over-report, categorize, and link these events as Black-on-Black crimes. By categorizing and over-reporting African American incidents of crime, the media separates African Americans from other social groups and pushes them into a criminal role (Fair, 1994). As a result, the media shapes and develops racially loaded terms for African Americans, contributes towards reifying African Americans as outsiders, and connects their identity with criminality (Fair, 1994). The media constructs crimes as a unique social issue isolated to the African American and makes them appear as something negative and demoralizing (Fair, 1994; Murji 2002; Oliver, 2003).

As African Americans were negatively constructed as the “other” in media, so too is rap and rappers. Scholars were able to show that popular media associates rap artists to crime or criminal aspects (Kubrin, 2005 & Rose, 1991). Scholars can suggest such an association due to the pioneers of rap coming from an African American background and self-identifying as gang members (Kubrin, 2005). As a result, mainstream media would often claim that their lyrics are portraying, praising, and promoting a gang lifestyle and the violence that comes with it (Cochran, 2015 & Kubrin, 2005). For instance, a study examining hip-hop artist Chief Keef, a controversial rapper from Chicago and member of the street gang known as the Black Disciples, found news media to focus on his gang affiliations, his past feuds with rival gangs, and the violent content of his lyrics glorifying Chicago’s murder rate (Kot, 2012; Kot & Gorner, 2012). In such stories, the media would often employ leading headlines that provoked fear, using terminology like, “Chicago Hip-Hop War of Words Turns Violent” or “Whether Hip-Hop Feud Linked to Slaying” (Kot & Gorner 2012). As a result, Cochran (2015) suggests this form of reporting works to “other” and criminalize rap artists.

Social Constructionism

To understand how African Americans victims and African American rappers have this negative association, this study will draw upon the Social Constructionist framework. Social Constructionism can be defined as, “how people create and respond to conditions, how [people] categorize and typify, how [people] subjectively construct the meanings of problems, and how [people’s] constructions influence how we act towards those conditions” (Loseke & Best, 2011, p.30). Berger and Luckman (1966) believe what a person holds as being important is a result of what they encounter. Values, events, and individuals are given social significance through being exposed to certain people and institutions (Berger & Luckman, 1966; McQuail, 2005; Surette, 2014). As a result, Surette (2015) argues that such interactions affect a person’s perception of reality. When people interact with one another, the language they use becomes a, “medium in which meanings, descriptions or characterisations of things are configured” (Twashua, 2003, p.333). Once configured, recipients of these messages can either be exposed to news ways of perceiving reality or have their own underlying beliefs reinforced (Scheufele, 1999 & Twashua, 2003).

Social Constructionism and the Media

As Social Constructionism expanded over the years, scholars began to use its framework to discuss the media’s influence (McQuail, 2005 & Surette, 2014). Surette (2015) believes that media has become a powerful institution in the construction of social reality. In media, claim-makers compete with one another to define what social problem is worth the public’s attention and take ownership of proposed causes and solutions (Surette, 2015). Media will use frames to influence how an event, situation, or individual should be perceived (McQuail 2005; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Scheufele and Tewksbury (2007) explain that frames are “invaluable tools for presenting relatively complex issues...” (p.12). Iyengar (1996) explained that the language

and images used in media have a profound influence on thoughts. Depending on the way a medium presents information about an issue will limit and shape the audience (Iyengar, 1996). As result, media outlets will employ different frames to, “reduce the complexity of an issue” (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, p. 12), introduce new perspectives, or reassure their audience's beliefs (McQuail, 2005). Iyengar (1996) suggests that media frames can be categorized as either episodic or thematic. When the media uses an episodic format, outlets will focus on a single event, highlight the people involved, and will not connect it to larger structural issues or past events (Iyengar, 1996 & Surrette, 2015). However, when media uses a thematic format, they often connect the event or individuals involved with trends, past events, social problems, or systematic issues (Iyengar, 1991 & Surrette, 2015). These oppositional framings will elicit higher emotional reactions and carry human interest (Baum, 2003 & Gross, 2008). In cases involving crime, media will often use an episodic frame since it allows them to put a “face” to an event (Lene, 2011). Mastro, Blecha, and Seate (2011) examined criminal depictions of African American NFL athletes and found that news outlets were 88% more likely to use an episodic frame since it allowed them to place sole blame on the athlete for their crime, and disregard any accomplishments. By analyzing episodic framing on high profile individuals, Mastro, Blecha, and Seate (2011) were able to show the narrow depiction of African Americans in the media.

Claims-making and Claims-makers

Claims-makers serve an important function in the social construction of individuals (Surette, 2015). According to Surette (2015), claims-makers refer to “promoters, activists, professional experts, and spokespersons involved in forwarding specific claims about a social condition” (p. 35). Claims-makers focus on using the media to reassure audience members on certain ideas and solutions (Leone, 2013). By using certain episodic and thematic frames, claims-makers “obsessively commit themselves to the creation or enforcement of certain perceptions”

(Jones, 1997, p. 6), with the use of verbal and visual claims (Loseke, 2003). This process serves to validate ideas that they want to push or reinforce to the audience (Loseke 2003). Verbal claims are defined as statements, phrases, and quotes made on a platform, while visual claims can be arguments or perspectives constructed through images and videos (Loseke, 2003).

When analyzing the presentation of African Americans, scholars found media using episodic frames together with verbal and visual claims associate to African Americans with criminality (Leone, 2013 & Virkus, 2014). For instance, claims-makers were found belittling African Americans by calling them monsters and displaying pictures of their victims on the front page of newspapers (Virkus, 2014). The inclusion of such content makes the audience feel more hatred towards the African American (Virkus, 2014) and reinforces the problematization and perpetuation of the “other” amongst African Americans (Loseke, 2003).

Mainstream and Alternative media

Media is differentiated into two categories by critical media scholars; mainstream or alternative (Cissel 2012; Tsfaty & Peri, 2006). For the purpose of this current study, mainstream media is defined as outlets that retain enormous political influence and target the largest possible share of people to guide public opinion on social issues (Mills, 2000). According to Thussu (2007), these include outlets such as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Times*, Yahoo! News, Los Angeles Times, MSNBC, and CNN. Conversely, I employ Tsfaty and Peri’s (2006) definition of alternative media sources which refers to “communication channels that are tailored to a certain demographic and serve particular rather than collective needs. Usually by expressing perspectives not frequently incorporated into mainstream media” (p. 168). Outlets such as ChicagoCrusader, HipHopWired, and Essence are considered alternative since they are tailored to a certain demographic and cover issues through their perspective (Williams, 2019). Given an

outlet's categorization, can often predict the narratives, images, and language used in its stories (Kenix, 2009; Tsfaty & Peri, 2006). Alternative media such as ChicagoCrusader and Essence, are more likely to include claims and photos of communities of color than mainstream outlets, use uplifting depictions, and show images/videos of individuals outside of criminal activities (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). Conversely, mainstream outlets such as The Los Angeles Times and *The Washington Post* are more likely to expose minorities as potential defendants, use titles that create sympathy for the victims, and contain harsh rhetoric that condemns ethnic perpetrators (Carter, 2015 & Dixon, 2017).

Claims-makers in Mainstream Media and African Americans

Claims-makers in mainstream media have been found to negatively depict African Americans. In most instances, claims-makers involved in mainstream media do not typically represent the interests of the African American community (Entman, 1992 & Entman, 1994). News organizations such as Fox, CNN, NBC, and CBS are made up of Caucasians and play to a white viewership. Claims-makers tend to be Caucasian broadcasters, celebrities, politicians, law enforcement, and victims (Diuguid & Rivers, 2002). As a result, their messages are known to problematize minorities as criminals (Diuguid & Rivers 2002; Entman, 1992). To this end, a study conducted by Entman (1994) estimated 90% of stories have been found to negatively portray African Americans if mentioned. Claims-makers in mainstream media understand that their white viewers have had, "limited personal contact or [have] hostile predispositions towards those of [different] [racial] [backgrounds]" (Entman, 1994, p.517). As a result, mainstream media plays off these ideas and uses claims-makers to deliver messages that cater to the audience's beliefs (Costa Gama, 1998; Dixon, Azocar, & Michael 2003). This becomes evident when mainstream outlets use African American celebrities to speak on African Americans (Fayne, 2019). According to Fayne (2019), mainstream news outlets will only have African

American celebrities speak on African Americans victims in times of racial injustice. Often times media will present what celebrities have to say after explaining and giving detailed accounts on the act and wrongdoing that the individual was involved in (Carter, 2015 & Fayne, 2019) By only being mentioned as victims in racial injustices and having celebrities speak out after the fact, a victim's innocence is omitted, maintaining hostile framings of African Americans (Fayne, 2019). Framings of this nature contribute toward a tautological cycle where audience members promote negative depictions to others they know, and such beliefs continue to be reinforced through claims-makers in media (Dixon, Azocar, & Michael 2003; Fayne 2019).

Claims-makers in Alternative media and African Americans

Claims-makers in alternative media offer different portrayals of African Americans (Gibbs & Hamilton, 2001; Johnson & Dixon, 2008; Vercellotti & Brewer, 2017). Claims-makers in alternative media will promote narratives that go against mainstream media's depiction of African Americans (Gibbs & Hamilton, 2001; Johnson & Dixon, 2008). By including positive depictions of African American individuals and communities, and having diverse sets of claims-makers, alternative media develops sympathetic framing and nuanced portrayals (Johnson & Dixon, 2008).

Studies assessing alternative media and African Americans have typically examined the Black press (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). According to Dolan, Sonnett & Johnson (2009), Black press refers to an organization comprised of African American celebrities, politicians, journalists, activists, front line workers, and residents in Black communities. Such claims-makers focus on covering African American issues and delivering positive messages of minority communities (Dolan, Sonnett, & Johnson, 2009). Beyond their positive messaging, the Black press and its claims-makers also benefit the community by depicting successful African Americans in non-

traditional roles/frames (Goodley, 2009; Johnson & Dixon, 2008; Vercellotti & Brewer, 2017). Given their experiential knowledge, Black press claims-makers are more likely to understand systemic issues underlying so-called Black on Black violence and are empowered to provide an alternative and sympathetic depictions of African American victims (Johnson & Dixon, 2008; Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Vercellotti & Brewer, 2017; Williams, 2019).

The Construction of African Americans Offenders in Mainstream Media.

When studying coverage of African Americans, Entman (1990) found 41% of all news stories related to crime. Entman (1992) was able to expand upon his previous work to show that when African Americans are mentioned in news, they are connected to violent crimes such as murder or assault. When mainstream media associate African Americans with crime, Entman (1990, 1992) and Oliver (2003) believe they are essentially “othering” African Americans and connecting them to social problems arising from crime. Oliver (2003) expanded upon Entman’s (1992) work to demonstrate that the offenses of alleged African Americans perpetrators are described in greater depth than with Caucasian perpetrators. Similarly, Oliver (2003) estimated that African Americans were 84% more likely to have their crime told in a dramatic fashion and more likely to give a sympathetic portrayal of the victim. These diagnostic framings, which align with Iyengar’s (1991) definition of episodic framing, problematize African Americans, and stereotype them as criminals inherently acting against the moral guidelines of society.

The content within mainstream stories reinforces the idea that African Americans are problematic and criminal. For example, Dixon and Linz (2000) found mainstream news to use visual and verbal claims to associate African Americans with crime and violence. This included images that depicted the “suspect as being physically held by police officers, as being handcuffed, and as being poorly dressed” (Oliver, 2003, p.6). Such ideas according to Dixon and

Linz (2000), harm the public perception of African Americans and associate them with criminality. In addition to creating a visual representation of the African American, certain media outlets would use verbal claims to negatively portray them (Diuguid & Rivers, 2000; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2003; Oliver, 2003). Lipschultz and Hilt (2003) demonstrated that when African Americans were mentioned in relation to crime, news reporters were more likely to include phrases as, “dangerous to society,” “violent takeover robbery,” and “terrifying ordeal,” words such as, “heartbreaking,” “nightmare,” “tragedy,” “brutal,” “terror,” “desperate,” “terrorized,” and “disturbing” to describe the event (p. 5). Through examining the statements and claims used, the media associates African Americans with criminal activities and shows that their actions were gruesome in nature (Dixon & Linz, 2000; Lipschultz & Hilt, 2003). Crichlow and Lauricella (2018) examined how “Canada’s largest newspaper framed news as it relates to Blacks, police, and race” (p.313) and found that stories associated an overall violent culture with Blacks. The association and framing of race in these stories shows how media reinforces a discriminatory culture with Blacks (Crichlow & Lauricella, 2018). Such racialization of a Black individual’s crime and criminality not only contributes to them being seen different but affects the public sentiment to make them appear detached from the social and moral reality (Baffoe, 2012; Dixon & Linz, 2000)

The Construction of African Americans Offenders in Alternative Media

Alternative media outlets in the form of Black press offer counter-narratives to what is seen in mainstream news (Newkirk, 2000). Unlike mainstream news that connects African Americans to the issue of crime, alternative media outlets are more likely to give insight to the life of the African American in crime-related stories, create stories that go beyond the incident itself, and criticize mainstream news stories (Irene, Deckard, & Rodriguez, 2016). Alternative

media outlets aim to push the idea of fair representation (Fair, 1994; Irene, Deckard, & Rodriguez, 2016). Studies regarding alternative media combat the negative images and ideas that mainstream news outlets push to their audience about African Americans (Entman & Rojecki 2000). When discussing the issue of crime, stories in alternative media are more likely to focus on an African American's role in the community and how influential they were in an individual's lives more than the actual crime itself (Wang & Armstrong, 2012). Alternative media tends to present a greater amount of information about the person involved to create a comprehensive story and to determine which factors were relevant to the case (Wang & Armstrong, 2014), reflecting the thematic framing concept suggested by Iyengar (1991). In doing so, the alternative media appears to prioritize fair and balanced representation of the individual while addressing the lack of equal representation of African Americans in mainstream press.

In addition to creating a fair representation of minorities, alternative media uses stories involving African Americans to target societal issues (Cole, 2010 & Jackson, 2017). When examining Black press, Fair (1994) found alternative stories blaming systematic issues in relation to Black-on-Black crimes. Fair expressed that articles from alternative media were more likely to connect, “education, lack of opportunity, teen-age pregnancy, drug abuse, poor housing” with the criminalization of African Americans (Fair, 1994, p.37). Through doing so, alternative media assigns responsibility onto factors other than the individual. A study conducted by Popkin (2007) would mention African Americans as, “...good people [having] bad years” (pg:41), “products of their environment” (Frasier, 2010), or “wrong place and wrong time” (Cole, 2010, p.57). Hence, alternative media will investigate why the person was involved in a criminal or illegal activity and problematize social factors.

African American Homicide Victims Portrayal in Mainstream media

The way that African Americans homicide victims are portrayed in mainstream media, reflects dialogues that insinuate African Americans to criminality. Such thematic framing forensically considers the victim's actions and background, and ultimately, blames their personal history (Dukes & Gaither, 2018; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Wright & Washington, 2019). To this end, Dukes and Gaither (2018) found that media outlets would emphasize the victim's wrongdoings and criminal past to justify their homicide. Research suggests African American victims were four times more likely to be portrayed as criminals rather than victims of crime (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Poindexter, Smith, & Heider, 2003). Mainstream news would claim an African American victim's death resulted from a dispute with another African American individual, being gang-related, or stemming from long-standing issues with other individuals in his area (Duke & Gaither, 2018; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Wright & Washington, 2018). These depictions draw on white stream angst to rationalize the African American as a burden to society, attributes their death to individual choices, and ignores systemic and institutional forms of racism (Entman 1994). Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro (2013) add that these thematic and forensic framings implicitly suggest to the audience that violence among African Americans is a cultural norm within their community.

Alternative Media and How African American Homicide Victims Are Portrayed

Alternative media sympathetically constructs African American victims. Studies find alternative press to dispel the distorted narratives and negative labels seen within mainstream news (Johnson & Dixon, 2008; Vercellotti & Brewer, 2006). Coverage in the Black press for example, has been found to humanize African American victims and connect their murder to societal issues (Costa Gama, 1998 & Headley, 1983).

In instances regarding African American homicide victims, the Black press would use thematic formatting to convey their message (Costa Gama, 1998 and Headley, 1983). Such depictions would include details such as the victim's nickname, what their family and friends had to say about them, the hobbies that they enjoyed, and their future aspirations (Costa Gama, 1998). Alternative media explores how the victim's death was processed by their family and friends through the use of emotionally charged visual and verbal claims (Callanan, 2012). Articles would use quotes stating that the African American family members were, "shocked", "outraged", or "grieving" about their relative's death (Callanan, 2012, p.97). The visuals in these stories depicted people crying and embracing one another, images of the crime scene, and photos of the victim to create a sympathetic portrayal of African American victims (Callanan, 2012).

A second notable feature of The Black Press is its differential explanation of factors surrounding an individual's death (Headley, 1998). Studies regarding African American victims have been found to connect African American homicide victims to a lack of employment opportunities, systematic discrimination, and poverty (Headley, 1983 & Hannon, 2004). The alternative explanation provided within the Black press directly contrasts the criminalization of African American victims and the implied responsibility of their own demise (Costa Gama, 1998). Rather, African American homicide victims are presented as good people that were placed in bad situations or were affected by a negative social environment (Costa Gama, 1998). For example, stories covering African Americans killed as a result of a gang dispute were expected to discuss the issue of gang violence in the area and what can be done to address it (Costa Gama, 1998). Through such depictions, African American victims are presented as people that were negatively affected by systemic factors that plague the Black community (Costa Gama, 1998 & Newkirk, 2000).

How Living Rappers Are Depicted in Mainstream media

Scholars have been able to show how rappers are similarly depicted to African Americans (Cochran, 2015 & Harkness, 2013). When analyzing mainstream news articles, Rutherford (2001) found that 77.4% of articles negatively portrayed hip-hop artists. In most instances, scholars found media outlets to focus on rapper's gang and affiliations (Cochran, 2015 & Harkness, 2013). By connecting living rappers to gangs, set, and clique affiliations, the media pushes the notion that rappers are either violent or advocating violence despite a majority of artists not actively being involved in criminal activities (Aquil, 2018 & Cochran, 2015). Often, mainstream media outlets have used high ranking politicians and public officials as claims-makers to condemn rappers. When discussing rappers, Sieving (1998) found mainstream news to use statements of former presidents Bill Clinton and George Bush to criticize rappers for being brutes, representing an uncivil class of people, and inciting murder and mayhem. Cochran (2015) and Harkness (2013) were able to support Sieving's work when examining media coverage of Chicago rapper Chief Keef. In their study, they found that the media often repeated statements issued by Chicago's Chief of Police who insinuated his connection to the "Black Gangster Disciples" street gang and restating its violent history (Cochran, 2015 & Harkness, 2013). To Cochran (2015), Chief Keef was selected by claims-makers due to being the newest face of Chicago's rap scene, and having lyrics glorifying the city's murder rate. News stories would use verbal claims of him saying that he was "300" and claimed that the number, "related to his gang identity" to reinforce the demonization of hip-hop and its artists (Green, 2016, p.45). Green (2016) then went on to claim that Chief Keef, was encouraging his fans and listeners to embrace such lifestyles. Through using the unique case of Chief Keef, mainstream news continues to misrepresent, and stereotype artistry underlying the Chicago hip-hop scene and push the idea that all rappers are promoting such a lifestyle to their audience (Green, 2016).

In addition to connecting gang associations with rappers, mainstream media tends to frame rappers as antithetical to societal norms (Kubrin, 2005 & Smiley, 2016). For example, in a 60-minute interview with New York rapper, Cam'ron, mainstream outlets showed that Cam'ron was encouraging his listeners to use violence and not snitch on others for committing violence (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010). At the time that Cam'ron was interviewed, the issue of gangs, snitching, and violence was a prevalent topic that New York was dealing with (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010). As a result, mainstream news took various approaches to combat those who were promoting such ideas (Woldoff & Weiss, 2010). CNN and CBS used sound bites of his interview to shape the perspective of his character (Smiley, 2016). The media would use the soundbite of Cam'ron saying, "because with the type of business I'm in, it [snitching] would definitely hurt my business. And the way that I was raised I just don't do that. I was raised differently, not to tell" (Smile, 2016, p.4). The overuse of this abstracted moment was to show the harm that rappers are bringing. Decontextualizing the interview in this manner, makes it appear that Cam'ron and all rappers are enabling African Americans to commit crime (Smiley, 2016). In addition to using sound bites from his interview, Smiley (2016) found media highlighting the fact that Cam'ron and his crew "Dipset" sold "Stop Snitchin" t-shirts to further perpetuate the lifestyle that is associated with inner cities and African Americans. Similar to how Chief Keef was seen in the media, news stories misrepresented Cam'ron. Media outlets used Cam'ron to perpetuate the idea that all rappers are criminal and promoting deviant lifestyles.

The lyrical content of popular hip-hop music has also been used to associate living rappers with Black urban street life. In addition to using past interviews, news outlets selectively use an artist's lyrics to suggest that their works encouraging violence (Cochran, 2015). For example, Cochran (2015), found mainstream news relating to gangs and urban homicide in the

city of Chicago to draw upon “hip hop” culture as a central facet of the city’s violence. Cochran (2015) comparatively analyzed the lyrics of Robert Coleman (\$wagg Dinero), drawing stark contrasts between the media’s focus on his use of violent imagery with holistic discussions about family, life, and unemployment. Cochran (2015) demonstrates that mainstream media’s focus on violent content implicitly suggested that his lyrics would influence African Americans in lower-income areas to garnish guns and to be ready to start an issue before it happens. Media representation hinged on his association with a loosely organized group who called themselves “Team No Lackin,” tacitly demonizing Chicago’s hip-hop culture (Cochran, 2015, p.60), and lead to mainstream media demonizing him. Through using the lyrics, mainstream media appears to imply that living African American rappers are forcing criminality on the audience.

How A Dead African American Rapper is Portrayed in Both Mainstream and Alternative Media

The way mainstream media covers an artist after they die drastically changes (Hearsum, 2012). For example, Paula Hearsum (2012) found that when a high-profile individual dies from unexpected or unseen circumstances, positive renditions of their life and accomplishments become prominent within the media. While negative press and labels that were associated with their living personas disappear from the media (Hearsum, 2012). Hearsum (2012) study focused on the case of Amy Winehouse, an English singer who was plagued with drug scandals, and found that stories regarding her legal issues with drugs and public scandals disappeared. While stories regarding her accomplishments appeared in mainstream and alternative outlets following her death.

In the case of rappers, LJ Combs (2014) and Rutherford (2001) found that the media will similarly cover dead African American rappers to Winehouse. Through media coverage of the late Tupac Shakur, LJ Combs (2014) found that the way Tupac was covered dramatically

changed after his death. Before Tupac was murdered, both mainstream newspapers and alternative media in the form of “Black press” would discuss his legal cases or how he would glorify the explicit content of his music (Mendev, 2002 & Combs, 2014). However, after his death, studies found that 60.7% of mainstream and Black articles would give positive portrayals of Tupac (Mendev, 2002 and Combs, 2014). Mendev (2002) investigated portrayals of Tupac after his death and found that 72.8% of all mainstream and alternative articles would not mention any previous legal issues and identify Tupac as a “cultural icon” and a “talented artist who was taken too soon” (p. 1). If mainstream and alternative articles were to mention Tupac’s past legal issues, Rutherford (2001) found that they would contextualize his actions stemming from his rough social upbringing in an impoverished area. Rutherford (2001) found similar findings in the way Notorious BIG was depicted. After Notorious BIG was murdered, mainstream and alternative outlets avoided vilifying him by labeling him a “rap star” and “a gangsta rap artist who turned his drug-dealing past on the streets of Brooklyn into a platinum-selling recording career” (Rutherford, 2001, p.29). With discovering the different depictions seen with living and dead rappers, such findings will be useful to determine how Nipsey Hussle is seen in the media.

Limitations in Existing Literature

While there are several studies examining media depictions of African American homicide victims and more specifically, hip-hop artists, some gaps exist in the literature.

According to Wright and Washington (2018), most studies examining African American homicide victims have focused on a single source of media. Whether it was local news stories, newspapers, or television specials, few to no studies did a cross-sectional analysis among different media sources (Wright & Washington, 2018). By studying media in the form of articles

and videos, my study can address this gap by highlighting any similarities and differences among different media outlets (Wright & Washington, 2018).

Although the alternative press has examined how African American victims are depicted, new sources and outlets need to be examined. According to the work of Carter (2015), Black press and social media sites such as Twitter are primarily used to cover African American victims. With only these outlets covering African Americans, Carter (2015) believes that other media sources should be examined. By examining different outlets and how they depict those of African American descent, it will potentially lead to new insight and perspectives that have not been seen previously.

Various studies have shown that living African American rappers are negatively constructed in the media. Studies have typically shown living rappers being connected with gang associations and violence (Fishman, Mann, & Zatz, 1998; Smiley, 2016). In addition to being labeled a certain way, their lyrical content and previous interviews are associated with the codes and ethics of Black urban street life (Smiley, 2016). Despite studies showing how rappers are negatively depicted in mainstream media, no study has taken a different perspective. To the best of my knowledge, few to no studies have examined how mainstream news stories have positively portrayed a rapper in conjunction with the negative views. By focusing only on the negative aspects associated with the rapper, the media essentially shows a very narrow perspective. By studying all claims and images used regarding rappers, it could lead to an interesting analysis.

In addition to contrasting positive and negative portrayals of a rapper, studies need to focus more on the claims-makers involved. When analyzing the articles, I did not find significant evidence of scholars naming who the claims-makers are. Despite mentioning that claims were used from CBC, CNN, and *Washington Post*, no scholars have studied the wide range of

opinions with celebrities, politicians, and law enforcement about a particular rapper. Future studies need to examine who is being included, the type of claims they are making, and how that reflects the platform that they are being shown on. By adopting a different perspective on the matter, and identifying claims-makers in these stories, this creates very interesting and new avenues in Criminology and rap.

Studying how artists are seen in the media, provides great information, and a good starting point for future studies. In the case of Tupac and Notorious BIG, Combs (2014) showed that dead African American rappers are portrayed differently from when they are alive. To my best efforts, I have not been able to locate any other scholarly body of works that examines other rappers besides Tupac and Notorious BIG. Since scholars have only examined Tupac and Notorious BIG, this leaves scholars with a gap to examine new artists and find what new mainstream media and alternative media have to say about them when they die. Examining new artists and the platforms that report them is something that can be analyzed and lead to new studies. In the case of the Tupac case study, scholars only analyzed Black press outlets in the form of news articles. In the case of future research, new studies need to examine how online media discuss an African Americans rapper's death or how outlets that cover hip-hop are discussing dead artists. Through studying these outlets, it creates avenues for what future researchers can do in regard to studying high profile rapper death with news outlets.

Future research needs to focus on comparing how dead African American rappers are depicted in relation to normal African American victims. In past studies, researchers have been able to connect negative depictions of African Americans to how the media portrays rappers (Cochran, 2015). However, to the best of my ability, I have not been able to find a study that compares the claims, images, and claims-makers used to depict dead African American rappers

to what has been said about an African American homicide victim. By comparing the media's depiction of a dead African American rapper to the literature on a normal African American victim, it could show similarities or differences between how the media depicts the two. I intend on addressing this gap with my current and I will show how these groups are compared to one another.

Despite scholars examining alternative media, there remains a gap in the literature among the alternative media and the presentation of African American rappers. One thing that should be noted is that Black press was that the only form of alternative media used to compare mainstream's coverage to dead African American rappers (Combs, 2014). In most of the studies examined, scholars only have reviewed what Black press had to say in relation to the portrayal of African American rappers (Combs, 2014). With that being said, other outlets should be examined to determine if their perspective regarding dead African American rappers is different from what is being said in Black press and mainstream media.

Conclusion

Overall, this literature review provides critical insight into the social construction of African American homicide victims and rappers in the media. The literature draws upon the concept of moral panics and "othering" to show that African Americans are problematized in the media. Through examining the claims and claims-makers in alternative and mainstream media, studies have found that African American homicide victims are either criminalized or humanized depending on the platform they are seen on. In terms of living African American rappers, mainstream media has associated rappers with all of the negative ills associated with the African American community. However, once an African American rapper dies, their narrative drastically changes to a positive and sympathetic one in both types of media.

Despite studies examining the Social Construction of African American victims and rappers, there remains gaps in the literature. In terms of the studies conducted, most studies examined one form of media such as newspapers or videos and without mention of any comparative analysis between sources. Most studies examining African Americans or rappers have only examined one form of content in their study. Studies regarding rappers and media have not identified the claims-makers in alternative or mainstream media. Literature on mainstream media focuses on negative portrayals and never highlight positive depictions of rapper. Most studies regarding African American rappers have not examined any rapper since Tupac and Notorious BIG, or other forms of alternative media. By identifying these gaps, this new study will address aspects not seen in past work. This study will show A): how mainstream and alternative media cover the cultural significance of new a rapper such as Nipsey Hussle? B) if alternative and mainstream media platforms facilitate the images and narratives associated with African American victims or Rappers with Nipsey.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this following chapter I will outline my research questions and the different methodological procedures I used to answer them. The purpose of this study is to identify how Nipsey Hussle was portrayed in relation to how mainstream and alternative media have depicted African Americans and rappers. Through studying mainstream and alternative media sources, I believe that mainstream sources will offer both a sympathetic and demonizing presentation of Nipsey Hussle while alternative sources will only offer comprehensive and humanistic depictions. The present study analyzed online articles and videos covering Nipsey Hussle. I used a purposive sampling technique to select online articles and videos that were based on certain guidelines to obtain the richest data set. After using a purposive sampling approach, I then conducted a qualitative comparative analysis to compare themes I found in both mainstream and alternative outlets to determine similarities and differences from the sources.

Research Design and Questions

The purpose of the study was to identify the many ways Nipsey Hussle was covered in mainstream and alternative media and compare ideas seen in each outlet. Through analyzing mainstream and alternative media's presentation of Nipsey Hussle, this study is to contrast new findings with the standard portrayals of African American homicide victims and rappers.

In this study, three research questions were explored in the media's depiction of Nipsey Hussle.

- 1) How was the death of a hip-hop artist portrayed in mainstream and pop-culture media formats?
- 2) Is the negative stigma surrounding hip-hop artists are present with Nipsey Hussle?

- 3) Who are the claims-makers and what type of information they are using to describe Nipsey Hussle?

Source Collection

Purposive Sampling

A purposive sampling approach was used to identify a sample of online videos and print articles. This strategy employs a non-probability sample of media which was based on the subjective judgment of the researcher (Berg, 2009 & Merriam, 2009). Purposive sampling allows researchers to gather information based on factors or aspects that they deem significant to their research objectives (Merriam, 2009). In digital formats, these factors are often satisfied through the use of search parameters, which, “[identify] and selects the information-rich cases for the most proper utilization of available resources” (Ilker, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016, p.2). For example, Lanham (2018) used a purposive sampling method to gather sources regarding NFL protests. By basing their sample on, “the top five circulated national online sports websites.... That had related commentary towards the NFL protests as its central organizing idea, [and] were longer than 75 words,” (Lanham, 2018, p.47-48), they were able to get a rich sample of 80 editorial articles. A purposive sampling method is useful for the Nipsey Hussle case because it captures a rich data set for analysis. For the current study, the following parameters were set: web-based resources, incognito mode, search terms, and time span.

Sampling Frame

Web-based resources

This study examined online videos and articles located through a structured search of YouTube and Google. Scholars have indicated that YouTube and Google are the most popular platforms used to study coverage of celebrities or high-profile individuals (Dylko, Beam, Landreville, & Geidner, 2012). For example, Faris et al. (2017) used Google and YouTube to

systematically collect stories about presidential candidates in the U.S 2016 presidential election. Through their study, they were able to obtain a more diverse look into how sources covered high profiled individuals (Faris et. al, 2017).

Incognito Mode

I gathered articles and videos using the incognito browser on Google. This function provides some shelter from the algorithmic suggestion processes used in the selected websites by suppressing cookies, or traces of online behaviors. According to the studies conducted by Ma et al. (2013), when a person uses the search engine, YouTube and Google will use their search history to prioritize content from sources that they have already viewed. The incognito mode allows, “searching without previous search history influencing the results” (Measey et. al, 2019, p.2). A researcher’s browser is influenced by their search history which influences what sources they are exposed to and choose to examine (Measey et. al 2019). However, by using the incognito mode, it reduces the chance of falling victim to a sampling bias and overcomes researcher's bias (Measey et. al 2019). Hence, to avoid biased search results and create a more neutral search of stories regarding the Nipsey Hussle, I used the incognito browser.

Search Terms

All videos and articles were collected after using a search term. This study collected sources after putting, “Nipsey Hussle death”, in the YouTube and Google search engines. After using a particular search term, videos, and articles from mainstream and alternative media will be chosen to determine how he was covered. When it comes to using search terms, studies examining how celebrities are portrayed have commonly used this method to gather their cases. For example, Metcalfe, Price, and Powell’s (2011), study examining media’s portrayal of James Goody cancer diagnosis found over 1206 articles about the event by using “‘James Goody’ AND ‘cancer’” on Google. While Elizabeth Butler Breese (2010) who examined media coverage of

Jamie Lynn Spears pregnancy used, “Jamie Spears” AND pregnant” as search terms and was able to obtain a sample of 61 sources.

Time Span

Articles and videos examined were limited to pieces published the week following Nipsey Hussle’s death, March 31st, 2019 to April 7th, 2019. By restricting coverage of the event to its first week, it will allow me to have the richest amount of content to determine the people involved, how the murder occurred, and what others are saying about it. This aligns with the suggestions made in a study examining high-profile African American victims in which Wright and Washington (2008) indicated that news coverage of an event was most prevalent in the first week and diminished after the second week. According to the work of Chyi and McCombs (2004), first-week coverage tends to be more prevalent since they uncover the most amount of details about an event.

Data Sources

For the purpose of this study, data sources were categorized as mainstream and alternative. As mentioned in the literature review, mainstream media is defined as outlets that retain enormous political influence and target the largest possible share of people to guide public opinion on social issues (Mills, 2000), while alternative media are defined as outlets that are tailored to a specific demographic and cover issues through their perspective (Williams, 2019).

Mainstream Sources

Articles and videos for mainstream sources were selected from prominent new outlets. Information from mainstream media articles and videos were drawn from major services including CNN, ABC News, USA Today, *Rolling Stone*, CBS, New York Times, PBS News, Fox, Fox LA, Los Angeles Times, *Washington Post*, PBS News, NBC, NBC Los Angeles, and

CBS Los Angeles. According to Alexa (2011), such platforms serve as good outlets to study. Alexa (2011), demonstrated that these sources served as the most popular mainstream online news outlets and were acknowledged for having the biggest audiences. Hence, when it comes to media coverage on Nipsey Hussle, I believe such outlets were excellent sources to show how he was covered on a national scale. From the mainstream sources, a sample of 39 articles and 18 videos were examined.

Alternative Sources

The articles and videos for alternative media were selected from pop-culture media outlets. Pop-culture outlets can be defined as media sources that are oriented towards covering commercial entertainment and its actors (Jönsson & Örnebring, 2011). According to Jönsson and Örnebring (2011), pop-culture outlets act as alternatives sources because of their editorial scope, which does not explicitly focus on reaching the masses. Rather, these media pop-culture outlets cater to a certain demographic who are in tuned with celebrities, fashion, music, and entertainment (Jönsson & Örnebring, 2011). As a result, such outlets give comprehensive arguments, portrayals, and unique perspectives of the individuals they cover (Jonsson & Orenbring 2011; Rutherford, 2001). In regard to Nipsey Hussle's death, pop-culture outlets offer comprehensive coverage compared to mainstream media.

Pop-culture samples obtained during the timeframe included 52 articles and 19 videos. Samples were collected from the following outlets: Complex, Complex News, Everyday Struggle, XXL, The Source, Big BoyTv, Power106 Los Angeles, The Breakfast Club, Hot 97, Genius, HipHopDX, and The Fader. Koonce (1999) believed such outlets serve as credible sources due to their focus on music and entertainment. Making pop-culture outlets an excellent form of alternative media. In addition to focusing more on music than mainstream media, these

sources are chosen since they covered Nipsey Hussle prior to his death. By selecting sources that covered Nipsey before his death, it will provide an interesting contrast to mainstream sources.

Table 1.1 below lists all media sources and content format

Table 1.1: Mainstream and Alternative outlets

Media Sources

Name	Alternative/Mainstream	Online Print	Video Only	Mix
CNN	Mainstream			Mix
New York Times	Mainstream			Mix
USA Today	Mainstream			Mix
Rolling Stone	Mainstream			Mix
CBS	Mainstream			Mix
PBS News	Mainstream			Mix
Fox	Mainstream			Mix
Fox LA	Mainstream	Online Print		
Los Angeles Times,	Mainstream			Mix
CBS Los Angeles	Mainstream			Mix
Washington Post,	Mainstream			Mix
PBS News	Mainstream		Video only	
NBC News	Mainstream		Video only	
NBC Los Angeles	Mainstream			Mix

ABC News	Mainstream		Mix
Time	Mainstream	Video only	
Complex	Alternative		Mix
Complex News	Alternative	Video only	
Everyday Struggle,	Alternative	Video only	
XXL	Alternative		Mix
The Source	Alternative		Mix
Genius	Alternative	Video only	
Big BoyTv,	Alternative	Video only	
Power106 Los Angeles	Alternative	Video only	
The Breakfast Club	Alternative	Video only	
Hot 97	Alternative	Video only	
HipHopDX,	Alternative		Mix
The Fader	Alternative		Mix
HotNewHipHop	Alternative	Online Print	

Coding and Data Analysis

Descriptive Coding

Media artefacts were coded using a descriptive coding approach. Defined by Leavy (2014), descriptive coding involves researchers recording nouns and phrases that summarize the ideas, emotions, or expressions seen in large amounts of data. Researchers systematically review data and jot phrases/words adjacent to the data they are analyzing. It allows researchers to notice

central ideas in the data they are analyzing. By using certain words and phrases to explain a diverse set of data, Leavy (2014) suggests that patterns and themes could be identified. I utilized a similar process throughout my analysis. Since my research was guided by past studies on African American victims and rappers, I adopted Johnny Saladana's (2015) inductive reasoning approach to only code data and ideas that were related to Nipsey Hussle's character.

Collected media were analyzed based on their mainstream or alternative pedigree. I separated mainstream and alternative sources into a word document, while writing the information into a codebook. After separating videos and articles, both explicit and implicit forms of content were examined (Berg, 2009 & Holsti, 1969). I started by examining each article and video to determine what images, clips, claims, and text were used to describe Nipsey Hussle. I used primarily nouns and phrases to show what ideas were being expressed in videos and articles. When going through this procedure I went through three waves of coding. In these waves, I came up with numerous codes to show what was being expressed in each article or video capturing each code in parenthesis after each sentence. I continued to analyze each article and video to ensure that everything relating to Nipsey Hussle was coded. After coding the initial information, I decided to write potential themes next to the code in parentheses. Altheide & Schneider (2012) were able to validate such a method since it allowed them to organize important themes that arose in the sources they were analyzing. Figure 1.0 below demonstrates the way I coded my information.

Figure 1.0 Coding

-
- Then in 2017, he opened his flagship store, The Marathon Clothing -- now the anchor tenant, nestled in the middle of the shopping center (Marathon clothing store) (entrepreneurial) 13
 - "If you look at successful rappers or athletes, they make it and move on," said Gross. "It would've been easier for him to do what he was trying to do from somewhere else, but it was intentional." (easier for him to move on when rich) (how Nipsey Hussle was different from other celebrities) 1
 - Two miles away, off Western and Slauson avenues, **Hussle** and Gross last year opened a co-working space, Vector 90, to encourage people in South L.A. to pursue careers in math and science, and to serve as a conduit between Silicon Valley and residents (Vector 90) (community activist) 12
 - **Hussle** and Gross had plans to acquire enough land to build a residential and retail complex in Hyde Park, with 80 units of apartments and condos on top of shops with healthful food options. (buying land to make apartments and condos) (entrepreneur) 14
 - If all went as **Hussle** had planned, their mixed-use development would've been steps from the new Metro stop in Hyde Park, which is expected to showcase a community art project called Destination Crenshaw that the rapper had also been instrumental in getting off the ground. (Destination Crenshaw) (community activist) 13
 - He was an inspiration," Lawson, the childhood friend, said between tears. "He showed I don't have to be the consumer or the client. I can be the boss." (role model)(inspiring others) 15
 - **Hussle's** entrepreneurial vision extended even beyond South L.A. Gross said he had set his sights on creating a private equity real estate fund using Opportunity Zone tax incentives, created as part of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 to encourage long-term investment in low-income urban areas. (private equity) (entrepreneur) 15
 - In a lengthy interview with Forbes magazine earlier this year, **Hussle** laid out his plan to use the tax incentives to put Marathon Clothing stores, barbershops and fish markets in cities across the country. (Multiple businesses) (entrepreneur) 16
 - **Hussle** stood out in the hip-hop industry -- in which flashy cars and jewelry dominate music videos and social media -- for turning his street hustle into legitimate businesses that helped the people in his neighborhood. (being into business instead of material things) (how Nipsey Hussle was different from other celebrities) 2
 - Derrick Evans, 58, who traveled an hour by bus from his assisted-care facility to pay his respects in Hyde Park on Monday, said **Hussle** was more than a rapper. (paying respect) (paid tribute) (people paying tribute)
 - Creasy Mercer, 37, who "He tried to show us how to do this," he said, gesturing at
-

As depicted above, codes in parenthesis captured an idea that was being mentioned in the article. For example, when the article discussed how Nipsey Hussle opened a Vector 90 workspace for people in South Los Angeles to pursue careers in math and science, “Vector 90” was the code and theme of “community activist” was placed next to it.

Memo Writing

While coding my data I engaged in memo writing. Suggested by Charmaz (2006), memo writing allows researchers to analyze their data in the early stages of coding and to actively be

involved in the analysis of data until their study is finished. While coding the articles and videos, I would write various “memos” to keep track of my thoughts, questions I had, connect findings to central themes, and where I would recode data (Charmaz, 2006). Such memos were written in a jot form format on paper. As seen in Figure 2.0

Figure 2.0 Memos

- Celebrity tweets I originally had (RIP) (unexpected deaths)
- Went thru celebrity tweets from Jan. 17-23 highlighted celebrities as (integrity to unexpected death)
- The tweets were broken into subcategories but highlight under 1 theme. Several themes
- LA official (anti-gang) (loss for L.A community)
- Ask Popham about articles blane+ saying Nipsey was an entrepreneur, community activist, etc (Jan. 20, 201)
- remember to highlight manifest / latent ideas used to describe Nipsey
- ↳ Jan. 23
- Added Public official showing tribute - Jan. 24
- changing celebrity tweets cc
- ↳ to paid tribute (changed from unexpected death, "man of integrity" "remembering moment")
- ↳ Jan. 27, 2020
- m.
- narrow down themes to most important
- Finished coding and thematic coding
- get rid of loss for the L.A community, Different from other celebrities, Political activist, final tweet - Jan. 28
- Code ~~the~~ everything
- Coding I only ~~was~~ examined pieces of articles that described him / gave a portrayal of him
- ↳ not that important compared to other themes

Themes

I would digest the observed codes into larger themes during the second wave of coding. As a result of the memos and codes I made, I created fourteen initial themes. The initial themes that were identified as followed: entrepreneur, community activist, a gang member, how he was sympathized by others, systemic issues, loss for the L.A community, music accomplishments, anti-gang, different from other celebrities, political activist, family man, final tweet, disproving gang narrative, and blaming Nipsey for his own death. Despite making fourteen themes, I decided to focus on three. I decided to focus on the community activist description, Nipsey's depiction as a gang member, and how Nipsey Hussle was sympathized by others. I came to the decision for several reasons. These three themes were unique depictions of Nipsey Hussle and could be contrasted with past studies. By having themes that can be cross-examined with past studies, it allows for an enriched analysis (Ragin, 2008) and enables me to answer the three research questions I raised throughout this paper. Furthermore, certain themes were aggregated since they overlapped with these three main themes. For instance, when examining codes that were aligned with "disproving gang narrative" and "blaming Nipsey for his own death" themes, such ideas would relate to the gang narrative theme.

The three themes I have chosen for this study are important in the construction and portrayal of African Americans and rappers. When it comes to the depiction of Nipsey Hussle as a gang member, mainstream and alternative stories have focused on the gang elements of African Americans to support their own agenda. By analyzing the gang theme in mainstream and alternative stories, it allows new information to reinforce or refute past findings. Such ideas are present when examining the community activist and sympathy theme. Mainstream media often excludes the good deeds of African Americans, while alternatives stories provide a fully encompassing and sympathetic portrayal. With these two outlets having unique two ways of

presenting African Americans, it creates an opportunity to compare and contrast the narratives developed. As a result of past research, these three themes are important for my study.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis

After coding and creating themes, I engaged in a qualitative comparative analysis of online videos and articles. This research method allows for comparisons to be made amongst different sources that cover a topic or individual (Miethe, 2008). Developed by Charles Ragin (1987, 2000), qualitative comparative analysis views the medium that is discussing a topic as a unique and complex case that needs to be studied. With cases being unique, Ragin (1987, 2000) believed that the platform and the story itself need to be examined and compared to one another. As a result, researchers establish which elements lead to certain interpretations; or how certain contexts lead to different depictions (Esser & Vliegenthart, 2017; Miethe, Hart, & Regoeczi, 2008; Ragin, 2008). When examining rappers, Combs (2014) was able to use a qualitative comparative analysis to show how Tupac was examined in mainstream and alternative media. Through adopting this method, he was able to show that the way Tupac was depicted changed as a result of the platform he was on (Combs, 2014).

In this comparative analysis, I compared the images, claims-makers, and the context surrounding claims. Based on this information, such data validated my themes and enabled my data to support or challenge ideas of how African Americans victims and rappers are depicted in the media. Such information ultimately, led to a comparison between how mainstream and alternative sources compared Nipsey Hussle.

Chapter 4

Findings/Analysis

My findings/analysis section will be representing three distinct themes that emerged from the data. The following themes are organized into three chapters. Before each chapter, I discuss how mainstream and alternative media have normally depicted African Americans and rappers in relation to the theme of the chapter. After analyzing how mainstream and alternative outlets portrayed African Americans and rappers, I went on to demonstrate how stories depicted Nipsey Hussle. Chapter 4 starts by examining how mainstream media constructed Nipsey Hussle using a “crime” frame and focusing on his status as a gang member. While showing how alternative media diverged from such coverage. In chapter 5, I went on to determine mainstream and alternative media’s depiction of Nipsey Hussle in his community. While chapter 6 goes on to discuss the various presentations of sympathy seen in the media.

Mainstream Media: Gang Narratives with African Americans

As previously discussed, mainstream media has traditionally distorted the images of African Americans. Hoecker (2016) citing the work Entman and Rojecki (2000) explains that mainstream news tends to categorize African Americans using a criminal “frame”. As they note, “mainstream newspaper and local television reports exaggerate the role of African-Americans as perpetrators and underrepresent them as victims” (p. 33). In many cases, the media does this by pushing the gang narrative with African Americans (Greenberg et.al., 1998). News stories containing African Americans will have their gang affiliations mentioned and connected to the rise of gang violence (Hoecker, 2016). The criminal frame shapes presentations to make African Americans appear culturally deviant and reinforce a criminal persona to viewers.

Nipsey's Gang Affiliation

Based on analyses of sampled media, mainstream news frequently discussed Nipsey Hussle's gang affiliation in connection to his death. Of the thirty-nine mainstream articles and eighteen videos collected, 41% ($n=16$) of articles and 38% ($n=7$) of videos discussed Nipsey Hussle's gang affiliation. Of the sixteen news articles, eight articles from the *New York Times* (2019), *USA Today* (2019), *The Washington Post* (2019), ABC News (2019), NBC News (2019), and NBC Los Angeles (2019) would mention that Nipsey was a member of the Rollin 60's Crips. Nipsey's gang affiliation was reinforced by mainstream videos as well. Out of eighteen mainstream videos, seven videos directly referenced his gang background. Sources such as CNN (2019), ABC News (2019), PBS News (2019), and NBC News (2019), state that Nipsey was a part of the Rollin 60's Crips. By claiming that Nipsey Hussle was a part of the Rollin 60's Crips, mainstream media continues to associate a gang identity with African American victims (Greenberg, Bradley, & Brand, 1998). By emphasizing that Nipsey Hussle was a member of the Crips, these stories support the criminalization of African Americans and influences the audience to believe such ideas (Fair, 1994).

Such ideas are reinforced when reporters in mainstream media would claim how Nipsey Hussle was "a rapper who didn't shy from his gang past" (PBS New Hour, 2019) and "a rapper who [admitted] to being in the gang" (ABC News, 2019). Using Nipsey's gang connections, mainstream conglomerates reinforce the notion that rappers are part of a deviant subgroup and influence audience members to believe that their death was associated with that gang (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013). When videos include that he was "a rapper who [admitted] to being in the gang", it implies to the audience that Nipsey Hussle embraced being a gang member and that his death is associated with his gang connections.

Nipsey Hussle's Murder

When describing Nipsey Hussle's murder, articles and videos use a gang narrative in his death. Fifteen articles and three videos claim that Nipsey Hussle was killed as a result of a "personal dispute" he had with an individual. Three articles from ABC (2019), USA TODAY (2019), and *The New York Times* (2019) claim how Nipsey Hussle was killed due to a "personal dispute with someone who was a gang member". While five articles referred to his killer as being affiliated with the Crips. Since sources claimed that Nipsey Hussle was a part of the Rollin 60's Crips and the person who killed him was a gang member as well, they are implying a gang dispute with the individual. With Los Angeles being plagued with gang rivalries and conflict networks connecting 158 street gangs to one another, gang violence has become a norm amongst news cycles (Randle, 2017). In most cases surrounding Black-on-Black crime, direct quotes will dismiss the event as a gang conflict to influence the audience to believe that an individual's death had stemmed from their previous gang affiliation (Dukes & Gaither, 2018). The implied connection between Nipsey Hussle's death and his past gang affiliations is yet another example of the mainstream media pandering to white fears about Black gang violence.

The frequent appearances of statements like "not gang-related" and "personal dispute" emphasizes the connection between gang narratives and the representation of African Americans victims in mainstream media. When examining articles and videos, the notion that the event was "not gang-related" was only reported eight times versus the seventeen times the "personal dispute" claims were reported. Such findings reaffirm that mainstream media under-reports the innocence of African American victims (Dixon & Linz, 2000). According to Dixon and Linz (2002), news stories containing African American victims were 4.7 times more likely to ignore elements that make the victim innocent. This implies to viewers that an African American's

victimization as being less “worthy” of the victim status. Through examining how the “personal dispute” and “not gang-related” claims were implemented, mainstream news continues to over-report on the violence associated with African Americans and underreport elements of an African Americans' innocence. When innocence is underreported and violent elements are overreported in news stories, individuals who are of African American descent are more likely to be seen as problematic to audience members (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013). Such an idea influences the audience to believe that the actions and personal identity of African Americans as being deviant (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013). By failing to denounce the gang narrative in most stories, it supports the idea that mainstream media are still associating a gang identity with Nipsey Hussle (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013).

The Issues of Gangs in Los Angeles

The issue of gang violence was apparent in Nipsey Hussle's depiction. Four different articles leveraged Nipsey Hussle's gang affiliation to engage in a discussion about gang violence in Los Angeles. For instance, articles from ABC News (2019) and USA Today (2019) claimed that “the murder followed an upsurge in gang shootings in the Crenshaw and Slauson area”. Several articles in *The New York Times* then went on to identify the area in which Nipsey Hussle was killed in as a “gang heavy area” (*The New York Times*, 2019) and reporting that the area was, “known for gang violence” (*The New York Times*, 2019). Through such labels, mainstream outlets are not explicitly connecting Nipsey Hussle's death to his gang ties but are implicitly forcing a gang narrative onto his character. Mainstream media will use major events involving high profiled individuals to advance their own agenda on issues (Cole, 2001). Jill Leovy (2015) found that when an individual comes from a gang background, news stories will use verbal claims and statistics to push a gang narrative with the individual. By seeing how Nipsey Hussle

was connected to a “surge in gang violence” and how stories would highlight the gang presence at the area he was killed at, his gang identity played a significant role in stories despite not being an active member. These claims are not taking into consideration important social issues in these communities and placing blame on Nipsey Hussle for his own death.

Overall mainstream outlets facilitated a gang narrative with Nipsey Hussle. Mainstream news discusses his gang affiliations after his passing to place him into a criminal role. News stories under-report the event as being “not gang-related” and overreport on his altercation with a gang member. Due to this framing, mainstream news makes Nipsey Hussle appear less innocent to audience members. Lastly, articles and videos connect Nipsey Hussle's death to gang statistics, events, and areas to further support a gang narrative.

Alternative Media: Gang Narrative

In contrast to the negative depictions seen in mainstream media, alternative media construct African American victims comprehensively and sympathetically. Alternative outlets combat the negative images and ideas seen in mainstream news outlets and create a more nuanced depiction of African Americans (Entman & Rojecki, 2000). For example, alternative news in the form of Black press highlight family life, education, friends, and dreams of African American victims in conjunction with their death (Carter, 2015; Wang & Armstrong, 2012). Alternative media's thorough and balanced coverage humanizes African Americans (Carter, 2015).

Nipsey's Gang History

As compared to mainstream media sources, pop-culture outlets used Nipsey Hussle's gang ties to highlight his accomplishments. Seven articles from music platforms such as The Source, Pitchfork, XXL, Complex, and Hot New Hip discussed his gang identity in connection to

the many accomplishments he was known for. Articles then went on to mention that “Nipsey Huddle was a gang member but urged others to find an alternative path” (Complex, 2019), “[was] a gang member but put money into his community” (The Source, 2019) and “embraced his gang upbringing so others in his community to value themselves and [know] that they could make it” (XXL, 2019). From these findings, pop-culture media depicted Nipsey Huddle similar to how Black press would portray African American homicide victims. As mentioned previously, alternative news in the form of Black press is known to create comprehensive portrayals of African American victims (Carter, 2015). In these stories, Nipsey Huddle’s gang involvement is not the central theme in pop-culture. It is mentioned in a historical context to understand his past and illustrate what he had to overcome to achieve his accomplishments. Unlike mainstream stories that would focus on his gang history to garner less sympathy from their audience, pop-culture incorporates all aspects of Nipsey’s life for a complete picture of his life.

Denouncing Gang Association

Alternative media took a unique approach in covering Nipsey Huddle’s murder and would denounce the idea that his gang identity played a role. Articles from The Source, XXL, and HotNewHipHop mentioned that the murder was “not gang-related” (HotNewHipHop, 2019; The Source, 2019; XXL, 2019). Although it may appear similar to how mainstream outlets spoke about Nipsey Huddle and his murder, pop-culture stories took a different approach in explaining it. When discussing his murder these sources would refer to the gang narrative used in contemporary mainstream media. For example, HotNewHipHop claimed that “news outlets might claim that was murder was gang-related, it was not the case. Members from the community were found to report the event as not being gang-related and stemmed from an argument Nipsey had hours previous” (HotNewHipHop, 2019). The referential inclusion of

mainstream media's biased depiction of African Americans in relation to the gang narrative, shows pop-culture outlets understanding the distorted presentation of African Americans. Through denouncing the gang narrative in his murder, pop-culture outlets mimic depictions seen in Black press by tapping into personal elements of an African American's community. Alternative media understand how mainstream outlets will use Nipsey Hussle's gang involvement to create a one-sided story to appeal to what their audience wants to hear about African Americans and rappers (Carter, 2015). Pop-culture sources give a realistic portrayal of Nipsey Hussle by tapping into a community who knew him (Wang & Armstrong, 2012).

Overall, pop-culture outlets take a different approach when discussing Nipsey Hussle's gang ties. Although mainstream and alternative outlets discuss Nipsey's gang history and denounce the gang involvement in his murder, pop-culture stories offer a more comprehensive presentation of Nipsey Hussle. Alternative outlets discuss Nipsey Hussle's gang identity but highlight his accomplishments to give a complete depiction of him. Pop-culture outlets then denounce bias narratives seen with mainstream sources while using members of the community to give objective coverage of Nipsey Hussle.

Conclusion

The process in which Nipsey Hussle was depicted varied between mainstream and alternative media. Mainstream and alternative outlets were found to uphold common narratives associated with their depictions of African American homicide victims. Mainstream outlets focused on Nipsey Hussle's gang associations, discussed his gang affiliation in his murder, and connected his death to the issue of gang violence in the Los Angeles area. Through such depictions, mainstream outlets used Nipsey Hussle to reinforce to the audience that African Americans and rappers are to be associated with criminality. However, alternative media outlets

were found to counteracted Nipsey's gang narrative to show that Nipsey was more than a gang member to their audience while denouncing the bias portrayals seen in mainstream news.

Chapter 5 Rappers in The Media

The way media covers rappers and African Americans influences how their audience perceives them. When examining mainstream and alternative media outlets, audience members are influenced to believe that African Americans and rappers are either destroying the Black community or uplifting it (Entman, 1990). Mainstream news typically associates African Americans and rappers with violence and deviant subgroups in their communities. However, alternative media outlets are more likely to focus on the good that African Americans bring to the community and programs they are implementing (Wang & Armstrong, 2012; Poepsel & Painter, 2016). In this chapter, I will discuss how mainstream news and pop-culture outlets depict Nipsey Hussle's role in the community. After discussing past studies with mainstream and alternative sources, I assessed if narratives associated with African Americans and rappers are present in Nipsey Hussle's depiction. From my findings, pop-culture stories continue to reinforce ideas seen in alternative media. Nipsey Hussle was framed as a person who built up his community, positively changed residential perceptions of the neighborhood, and created programs to help the youth. On the other hand, mainstream sources went against their standard depictions of African Americans and rappers. Stories showed Nipsey Hussle as a community activist, important in the implementation of community programs, and having a crucial role in aiding the African American community.

Alternative Media

Alternative media outlets develop counter-narratives about African Americans to positively depict them (Entman & Rojecki., 2000; Wang & Armstrong, 2012). As previously mentioned, alternative media in the form of Black press are more likely to focus on the community affairs of African Americans (Wang & Armstrong, 2012). Stories covering African Americans are more likely to show African Americans building and strengthening their

community (Wang & Armstrong, 2012). Whether it is showing African Americans organizing food drives, anti-drug programs, aiding homeless people, and youth programs, alternative media outlets are looking to create a more rounded depiction of African Americans as a whole (Wang & Armstrong, 2012).

Helping the community

After examining fifty-two pop-culture articles and nineteen videos, 42% of articles ($n=22$) and 79% ($n=15$) of videos emphasized Nipsey Hussle's role in the community. Twenty-two articles and fifteen videos emphasize the many actions that Nipsey Hussle had done for the Crenshaw and Slauson community. In these articles and videos Nipsey Hussle was said to "use the money he made rapping to... uplift his community" (The Source, 2019), "[employed] people in his community" (Genius, 2019), and "built institutions that facilitated empowerment" (Genius, 2019). While other stories show Nipsey Hussle's philanthropy, such as giving clothes to individuals released from incarceration, helping youth find alternatives paths from gangs, and renovating schools and playgrounds (Complex, 2019 & HipHopDX, 2019). Such findings show pop-culture outlets focusing on Nipsey Hussle's community affairs. From such statements, pop-culture stories counter mainstream media's portrayal of African Americans being a danger to the community. By mentioning how Nipsey Hussle helped children, enabled convicted felons to live a law-abiding life, and urged others to deter from gangs in the Crenshaw area, Nipsey Hussle is seen as an individual who is strengthening and building his community to viewers (Wang & Armstrong, 2012).

The Impact That Nipsey Had on His Community

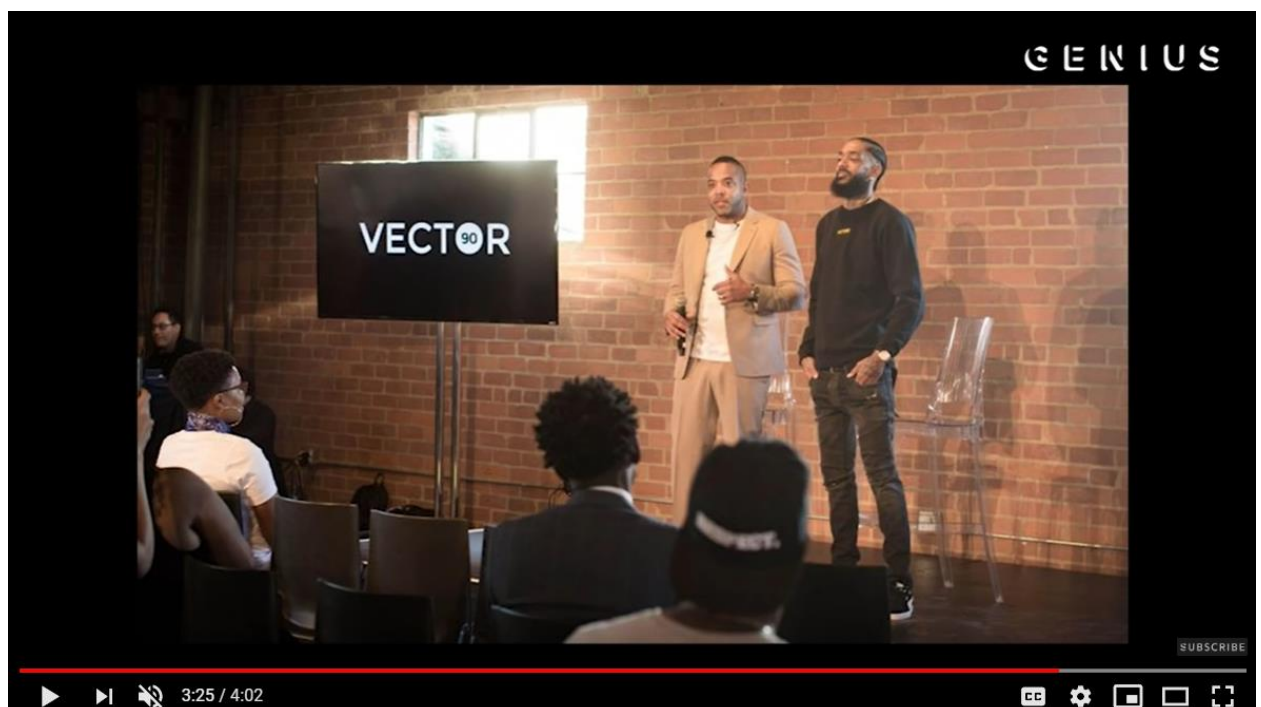
Pop-culture stories discussed Nipsey Hussle's impact on the Crenshaw neighborhood of Los Angeles. From sources collected, five videos and five articles described Nipsey Hussle as a man who healed the Crenshaw and Slauson community. These sources would highlight his

contributions in the form of barbershops, fish markets, tax agencies, and new apartments to Crenshaw (Complex, 2019a; The Source, 2019; and Complex, 2019b). Through introducing so many businesses to the community, articles and videos went on to claim that such actions made Crenshaw a landmark area and a tourist attraction for Los Angeles (LA Times, 2019). When analyzing how pop-culture outlets discuss Nipsey Hussle, sources followed the same framing mechanisms seen in Black press. Black press often uses thematic elements such as community initiatives to describe African American victims (Johnson & Dixon, 2008). When describing how Nipsey Hussle introduced businesses to the community and altered the perception of the Crenshaw area, pop-culture outlets not only focused on his murder but used thematic elements to show him as a community activist.

In addition to highlighting how Nipsey Hussle impacted the community, videos from Power 106 and Complex showed how he changed resident's perception of Crenshaw and Slauson. Through putting so much into the community, residents were claiming that "Nipsey Hussle made Crenshaw a place where its residents were proud to say they are from" (Complex, 2019), "transformed an area known for violence to a place people want to check out" (Power 106 Los Angeles, 2019), and "how [he] made people not scared of their own neighbourhood" (Complex, 2019). Since alternative news focuses on presenting the positive impact that African Americans have on their community, pop-culture outlets reaffirm such narratives with Nipsey Hussle (Poepsel & Painter, 2016). Using verbal claims of Crenshaw residents to recognize how built up and strengthened an impoverished community, shows pop-culture stories making Nipsey Hussle appear sympathetic to their audience (Callanan, 2012).

Programs That Nipsey Hussle Implemented in The Community

Alternative media outlets discussed the many social programs that Nipsey Hussle implemented in his community. Of the sources collected, six articles and five videos detailed the many programs that he created for his community. When covering the programs, articles and videos discussed Nipsey Hussle's Vector 90 and Destination Crenshaw initiatives. In their description of Vector 90, stories refer to Nipsey Hussle bridging the gap between the inner cities with Silicon Valley (Complex 2019, and HipHopDx, 2019). Sources from Complex (2019) and HotNewHipHop (2019) claimed that this program aided children in impoverished areas by giving them opportunities to use technology that they did not have access to and to meet people within the tech industry (Complex 2019; and HipHopDx,2019). While describing the Vector 90 program, stories displayed images and videos of such programs. Videos from Genius (2019) and HipHopDx (2019) generally included images of Nipsey Hussle introducing the Vector 90 program (illustrated in figures 1.1 and 1.2 below). Such visual and verbal claims draw attention to actions that Nipsey Hussle was doing for others and how he showed be perceived.



(Figure 1.1 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle introducing Vector 90 program, Source: Genius

Remembering Nipsey Hussle (2019))



(Figure 1.2 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle introducing Vector 90 program Across North America, Source: HipHopDx: Nipsey Hussle “The Marathon Continues” – A tribute to the Life and Legacy of Nipsey Hussle (2019))

After discussing the Vector 90 program, pop-culture videos described Nipsey Hussle’s open art project titled Destination Crenshaw. When describing Destination Crenshaw, stories went on to claim that “Nipsey Hussle wanted to showcase the talent that came from the inner cities and publicly display their work for everyone to see” (HipHopDx, 2019). Through highlighting these programs, pop-culture outlets show the many ways Nipsey Hussle built up his community. Such findings support what Wang and Armstrong (2012) were able to find in Black press and their coverage of African Americans uplifting their community.

Overall, alternative media outlets acknowledged Nipsey Hussle's role in the community. Through images, claims, and the titles of each story, alternative outlets focus on the individual actions Nipsey Hussle took part in to build up his community. Pop-culture outlets thematically frame stories to not only focus on the murder but to positively acknowledge the good deeds he had done for the Crenshaw area. Furthermore, sources were more likely to use visual claims to show the individual programs that Nipsey Hussle implemented and to positively accolade him in association with his community. Such ideas are important since they go against mainstream media's depiction of African Americans in their community. As a result, pop-culture outlets continue to reinforce to their audience that African Americans are different from what the mainstream audience makes them out to be.

Mainstream Media

Mainstream media has created a certain narrative regarding African Americans. According to the work of LeDuff (2011), mainstream news overlooks the good deeds of African Americans in their communities. Mainstream news limits their audience's perception of African Americans implicitly suggesting that they are not capable of doing good (Entman, 1994). Coverage from major news outlets primarily show instances of extreme failures or harm caused by African Americans (LeDuff, 2011). This type of coverage contains images of African Americans destroying local stores in the community, ruining community events, and harming innocent bystanders (Entman, 1990).

Such themes are often present with how the media depicts African American rappers in their communities. Since the audience and artist within rap tend to come from an African American background, many mainstream outlets sustain the belief rappers are influencing African Americans communities to be criminal (Fishman, Mann, & Zatz, 1998). Stories place an

emphasis on an artist's violent lyrics, disregard for the law, and advocating an ambiguous street life (Fishman, Mann, & Zatz, 1998; Smiley, 2016). Through these portrayals, rappers are depicted as advocating for African American community to the same (Smiley, 2016).

How Nipsey Hussle was A Community Activist

Instead of mainstream outlets showing Nipsey Hussle destroying his community, stories highlight how Nipsey Hussle contributed to his community. Out of the thirty-nine articles and nineteen videos, 77% of articles ($n=30$) and 68% ($n=13$) of videos mention Nipsey Hussle's contributions in the community. Both articles and videos constantly labeled Nipsey Hussle as a, "community activist" (Los Angeles Times, 2019; USA TODAY, 2019; CNN, 2019). Through labeling Nipsey Hussle as a community activist, mainstream stories do not uphold the narratives seen with African Americans and the community. Instead of implying that African Americans can only be criminals, mainstream news is explicitly showing him to be a representative of social change. Mainstream articles and videos claim that Nipsey Hussle invested into his community (Los Angeles Times, 2019), bought and expanded local businesses (USA TODAY, 2019), and rebuilt his community (CBS News, 2019; & ABC News, 2019). By highlighting how Nipsey Hussle has helped the community, mainstream news shows that African Americans can be depicted positively. These stories show media going against the idea that African Americans bring harm to the community (Entman, 1990 & LeDuff, 2011). With African Americans depicted as harming their communities through the use of drugs and violence (Entman 1990, & LeDuff, 2011), showing an African American rapper building up his community with business ventures goes against the narrative in mainstream media.

Such ideas are strengthened when mainstream outlets would interview residents within the Crenshaw community. Whether it was, "hiring felons that could not find employment"

(CNN, 2019), “buying children school clothing” (PBS News Hour, 2019), and “[taking] care of the poor” (ABC News, 2019), residents of the Crenshaw community recounted the contributions that Nipsey Hussle made. Videos from USA TODAY (2019) and NBC Los Angeles (2019) included photos of Nipsey at food drives and embracing children at the playgrounds that he built (illustrated in figures 2.1 and 2.2 below). Mainstream media’s emphasis on Nipsey Hussle’s contributions to community eschewed stereotypes seen with African Americans and their community. Instead of mainstream stories having a visual representation of an African American getting arrested, committing crime, and looking poorly dressed, stories show Nipsey Hussle committing charitable actions for people in his community (Oliver, 2003).



(Figure 2.1 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle at food, Source: USA TODAY Nipsey Hussle Shooting Suspect Arrested, Police Say (2019))

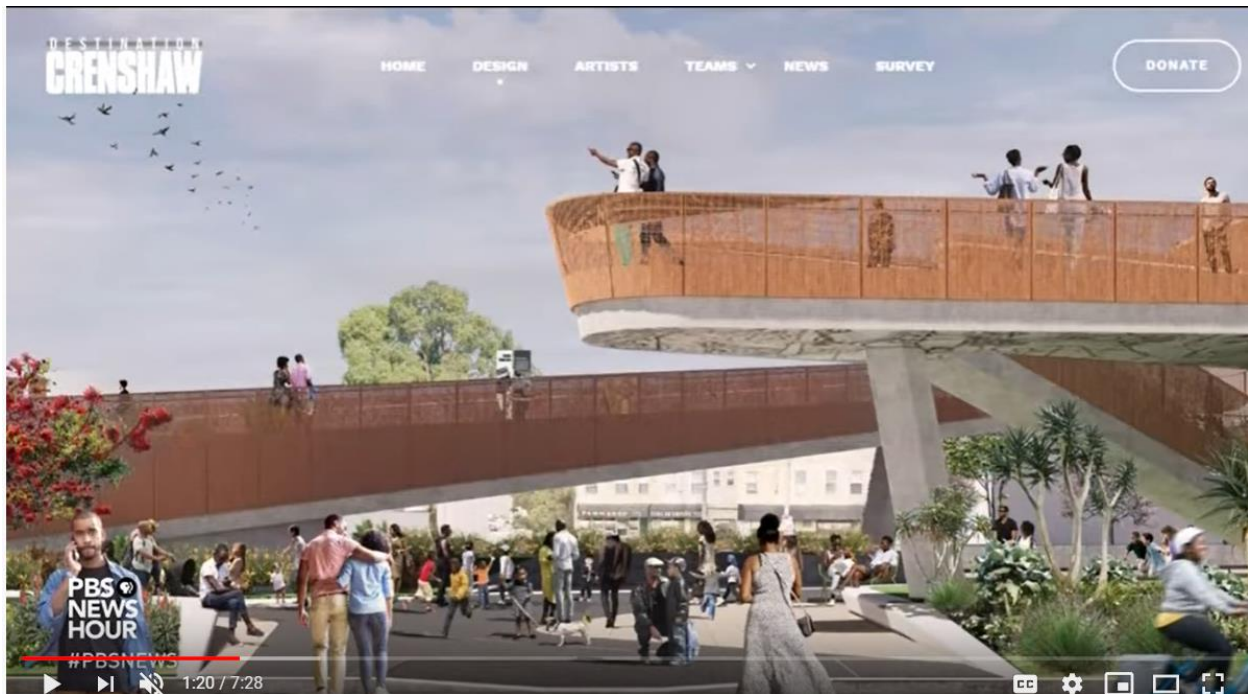


(Figure 2.2 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle interacting with children, Source: ABC News Nipsey Hussle’s Legacy Lives on in the Los Angeles community (2019))

Programs Implemented in The Community

Articles and videos would highlight various programs Nipsey Hussle implemented to his community. Mainstream stories would describe Nipsey Hussle aiding youth and local entrepreneurs with the Destination Crenshaw and Vector 90 initiatives (*The Washington Post*, 2019; NBC, 2019; Los Angeles, 2019). Through implementing Destination Crenshaw, sources claim that Nipsey Hussle was essentially promoting the “black cultural history of his neighborhood” (*The New York Times*, 2019) and “the achievements of [its] black artists” (USA TODAY, 2019). In addition to Destination Crenshaw, both articles and videos revealed how Nipsey Hussle’s Vector 90 program had a pivotal role in bridging the gap between the inner city and Silicon Valley. When discussing the Vector 90 program, reporters would highlight how it allowed “young people [to] take classes in science, technology and mathematics” (NBC News,

2019), and “to pursue careers in math and science” (USA TODAY, 2019). A video from PBS News (2019) was able to show clips of youth working in the Vector 90 and show images of Destination Crenshaw in their documentation of Nipsey Hussle (illustrated in figures 3.1 and 3.2 below)



(Figure 3.1 Illustrates Destination Crenshaw, Source: PBS News How Rapper Nipsey Hussle gave back to the community that raised him (2019))



(figure 3.2 Illustrates youth at Vector 90, Source: PBS News How Rapper Nipsey Hussle gave back to the community that raised him (2019))

From such examples, the media promotes a different narrative regarding African Americans victims and rappers. As seen previously, the good deeds of African Americans are rarely acknowledged in mainstream stories (Entman, 1994). Instead of failing to cover the good deeds that a rapper or African American is doing, Nipsey Hussle is illustrated to be helping those who are in an impoverished area. Nipsey Hussle helped people in Crenshaw by having their work celebrated, expanding their social network, giving them job opportunities, and making his community a better place.

Nipsey Hussle and Helping the African American community

The impact that Nipsey Hussle had on the African American community was well documented. Within many mainstream videos, African American residents of Los Angeles discussed the many ways Nipsey Hussle helped the African American community. Residents

claimed that Nipsey Hussle “[reinforced] the idea that Black people can be great” (ABC News, 2019), “was keen and focused on helping African Americans in his community” (CBS Los Angeles, 2019), “spoke to African Americans with his community to do better... in his music”, (*Rolling Stone*, 2019) (PBS News Hour 2019). By getting the African American perspective from Los Angeles, it is easy to see the impact he had. When examining the title of certain sources, the impact Nipsey had on the African American community was emphasized. In stories covering Nipsey Hussle, sources would be titled, “How Rapper Nipsey gave back to the community that Raised him” (PBS News Hours, 2019) and “Nipsey Hussle Mourned by African American Community” (CBS Los Angeles, 2019). Such examples go against the notion that rappers bring harm to the Black community and shows a mainstream audience another way of perceiving them.

Based on the interviews, subjects of these interviews, and article headlines, Nipsey Hussle is acknowledged for all the positivity he brought to the African American community. In most instances, mainstream outlets reinforce hostile and negative predispositions towards those of ethnic backgrounds to their audience however, this was not the case (Entman, 1994). Mainstream news used both manifest and latent forms of content to show to an audience of people with preconceived notions of minorities that an African American can be depicted as something other than a criminal or a menace to society.

Overall, mainstream media outlets went against the negative stereotypes seen with African Americans and rappers in the community. Rather showing Nipsey Hussle harming the Crenshaw community; articles and videos recount the good deeds he did for his community and its residents. Mainstream sources did not focus on his criminal associations but acknowledge all

the programs he implemented for them. Lastly, Nipsey Hussle was seen to be helping the African American community rather than harming it.

Conclusion

Both mainstream and alternative media outlets took similar approaches in discussing Nipsey Hussle's role in the community. Alternative and mainstream outlets gave positive depictions of Nipsey Hussle. The findings showed mainstream news going against their standard depictions of African American victims and rappers. Instead of mainstream stories showing an African American/rapper destroying a community, in a criminal role, and hurting the Black community, outlets would show the charitable actions that Nipsey Hussle was doing. Through these elements, mainstream outlets make their viewers believe that a rapper and African American can be seen in a positive manner. In addition to highlighting how mainstream outlets went against their normal depiction of African Americans and rappers, pop-culture outlets continued to uphold the same ideas seen with Black press. Pop-culture outlets would counter mainstream media's standard depiction of African Americans in the community with verbal and visual statements of Nipsey helping and uplifting his community. Showing to their viewers that African Americans are not what mainstream outlets make them out to be and that they can strengthen and build their community.

Chapter 6: How Nipsey Hussle was sympathized by others

The last theme presented in this study emerged from the various forms of sympathy used to describe Nipsey Hussle. In mainstream and alternative outlets, stories contained numerous amounts of people paying tribute and remembering Nipsey Hussle. The following chapter will discuss who the claims-makers are, and what claims and actions were made at the time of Nipsey Hussle's passing. Through examining the claims and actions portrayed in mainstream and alternative outlets, this chapter will show the media's presentation of sympathy in terms of Nipsey Hussle. The first half of this chapter will examine what claims-makers in mainstream stories had to say about Nipsey Hussle. While the second half will detail what claims-makers in alternative media stated.

Mainstream Media

Regarding the depiction of African Americans and rappers, mainstream stories contain archetypal individuals to give biased depictions. Mainstream stories employ community members, public officials, and celebrities to make African American victims and rappers appear negative to their audience. Coverage associated with African American victims has shown community member's blaming the victim for their death or showing celebrities giving artificial presentations that deprive the victim of their innocence (Diarra, 2013 & Fayne, 2019). While in the case of rappers, studies have shown mainstream stories using politicians and police officers to criticize rappers for being brutes, inciting violence, and representing an uncivilized class (Sieving, 1998).

Los Angeles Community

Residents in Los Angeles were showing sympathy towards Nipsey Hussle. Seven articles and eleven videos showed Los Angeles residents mourning and paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. Stories contained images and videos of Los Angeles residents creating memorials, wearing

Nipsey's clothing brand, creating graffiti art pieces, and gathering around the clothing store that Nipsey Hussle was killed at (illustrated in figures 4.1 and 4.2 below). Articles described people "[laying] down candles, flowers and signs to express their condolences" (*The New York Times*, 2019), "[playing] Hussle's music from speakers and lit candles in remembrance" (*The Washington Post*, 2019) and "[creating] a massive flower memorial spread out in front of Hussle's clothing store" (USA TODAY, 2019). From analyzing how these statements were displayed, it shows that the community was sympathizing and grieving over the death of Nipsey Hussle. The death of Nipsey Hussle is essentially portrayed as a loss for the Los Angeles community. By showing multiple examples of Los Angeles residents mourning and remembering Nipsey Hussle, mainstream media provides extensive sympathetic coverage. The imagery and quotes from the community connote eeriness, sadness, and a time of mourning amongst the Los Angeles community. The media's presentation of the many flower and candlelight memorials reinforces the notion that people within the Los Angeles community are hurt by the death of Nipsey Hussle. Often times when mainstream outlets use what's happening in the community to discuss African American victims, stories do not present community members paying tribute or speaking well on their behalf (Wellman, 2016). However, through showing Los Angeles residents paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle, mainstream media goes against the standard narrative they have with African Americans. Such ideas suggest to the audience that Nipsey Hussle was more than just a rapper who was killed but a person who greatly affected his community.



(Figure 4.1 Illustrates memorial for Nipsey Hussle with candles, Source: NBC News Rapper Nipsey Hussle killed in shooting outside his L.A. store (2019))



(Figure 4.2 Illustrates People gathering around a makeshift memorial for rapper Nipsey Hussle who was shot and killed outside his clothing store in Los Angeles on Sunday. Source the

Washington Post: Conspiracy theories about Nipsey Hussle's death aren't stupid. They're a form of grief)

Public Officials

Public officials from Los Angeles made statements regarding Nipsey Hussle. These included statements from high ranking officials such as Los Angeles' Mayor Eric Garcetti and Police Chief Michel Moore. Many articles show these high-ranking individuals speaking positively on behalf of Nipsey Hussle. Mayor Eric Garcetti was quoted saying how Nipsey Hussle was "a gifted and brilliant artist (ABC article, 2019), "working closely with the city to help save lives and transform lives, even as he was doing that for himself" (*The New York Times*, 2019), and a "great musician" (NBC News, 2019). While statements from Chief Michel Moore stated, "he was devastated by the killing of Hussle" (US News, 2019), and "[he] was a voice that was trying to help" (NBC News, 2019). Such claims are different from what is normally seen in mainstream media. Rather than mainstream outlets having public officials criticize Nipsey Hussle and reinforce the violent nature of rappers, mainstream media used Michel Moore and Eric Garcetti to frame Nipsey Hussle's death as a loss to the Los Angeles community. In most stories with public officials and rappers, public officials are seen at news conferences addressing the harm that rappers and African Americans have committed (Sieving, 1998). However, with Nipsey Hussle, Eric Garcetti and Michel Moore are seen at press conferences praising and acknowledging him for his work in the Los Angeles community. Such statements reinforce the notion with Nipsey Hussle being gone, the Los Angeles community will lose out on everything he brought forth, as seen in figure 6.1 below. This combination of verbal and visual claims shows the audience another perspective that is not seen with mainstream media, African Americans, and rappers.



(Figure 6.1. Illustrates Los Angeles' Mayor Eric Garcetti and Police Chief Michel Moore talking to the press. Source: USA TODAY: LAPD: Nipsey Hussle shooting was result of personal dispute, not gang violence (2019))

Celebrities

Many celebrities were actively paying tribute and mourning Nipsey Hussle. Stories covering Nipsey Hussle contained tweets and Instagram posts of celebrities addressing his death. When analyzing articles and videos, there were fifty-two instances of actresses, artists, actors, and athletes speaking about Nipsey Hussle. Celebrities ranging from Stephen Curry, Russell Westbrook, LeBron James, Issa Rae, Van Jones, Drake, YG, Rihanna, Diddy, Lauren London, Nas, Big Boy, Chance the Rapper, Beyoncé, and Meek Mill were seen in mainstream news. In almost every post, celebrities were showing condolence and remembering past encounters. For example, tweets from John Legend, YG, and Diddy would say;

“RIP Nipsey. I just spent Thursday with him filming a video for a beautiful new song we created with Khaled. We filmed in Inglewood, close to where he grew up. He was so gifted, so proud of his home, so invested in his community. Utterly stunned that he's gone so soon”, - John Legend (USA TODAY, 2019)

“You was a real big bro to me... YOU 1 OF A KIND!. "I took so long to post you kuz I Kant believe this (expletive), I don't wanna believe this (expletive). I'm not never accepting it. IDGAF what nobody say. It wasn't yo time to go. I'm lost homie”, - YG (USA TODAY, 2019)

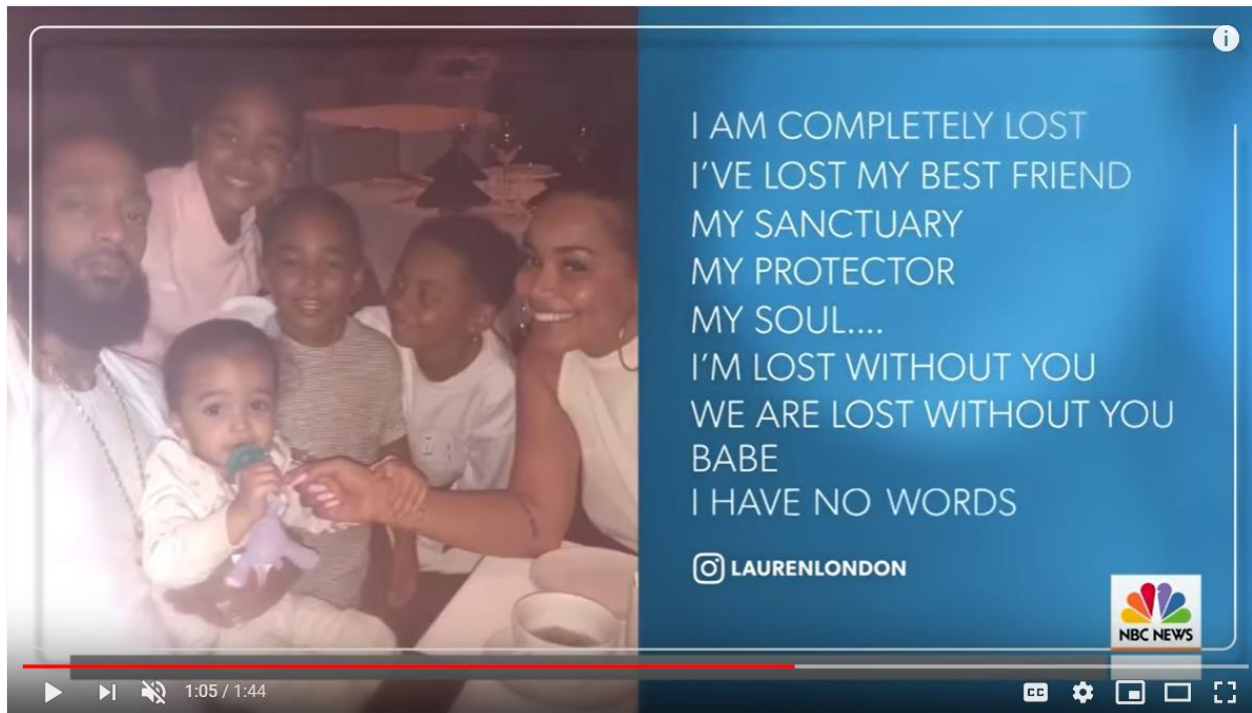
“Wow. I don't even know what to say. I'm confused. Nipsey and I had just started really getting to know each other. I feel honored to have worked on his project. Nipsey represents change, he represents evolution, he represents everything our culture needs to embrace" – Diddy (USA Today, 2019).

However, before these posts were introduced media would state things as “everyone from Drake and Rihanna to Steph Curry and Russell Westbrook recognizing the stamp he left on his city” (*The New York Times*, 2019), “News of the shooting death of rapper Nipsey Hussle is sending shock waves through the celebrity world, sparking tributes from fellow artists and fans alike” (USA TODAY, 2019), and “huge amounts of support and love came from his fellow peers in the world of celebrities” (*The Rolling Stones*, 2019). Through analyzing the presentation in connection with the celebrity's message, the media essentially frame Nipsey Hussle as a loss amongst the celebrity world. Unlike past research with mainstream outlets and rappers, the language surrounding African American victims is used to vilify them and reduce victimhood (Diarra, 2013 & Fayne, 2019). However, by covering Nipsey Hussle and connecting him to the world of celebrities, Nipsey Hussle is associated with a group that most people in modern society hold in high regard and appears respectable to a mainstream audience. Such reports go against

the typical stories associated with African Americans victims and celebrities. Rather the victim is seen in instances of racial injustice and lacking innocence, presenting it as a loss in the celebrity world gives Nipsey Hussle's innocence (Fayne, 2019). Nipsey Hussle's innocence becomes present when Lauren London's Instagram post was seen in news stories. Out of all the celebrities post seen in news stories, reporters only read the actress' Lauren London's Instagram post. Although Lauren London was a celebrity, she was the significant other to Nipsey Hussle and was the mother of his two-year-old son (ABC News, 2019). Reporters would read, "I am completely lost/I've lost my best friend/ My sanctuary/My protector/My soul..../I'm lost without you/We are lost without you babe/ I have no words" (ABC News, 2019). In addition to reading such posts, media outlets then followed up with several photos of Nipsey Hussle and Lauren London at award shows, in the Crenshaw area, and at family gatherings (illustrated below 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). Such presentations make Nipsey Hussle appear to be a good person to his peers, family members, and make Nipsey Hussle sympathetic to a mainstream audience.



(Figure 5.1, Illustrates Nipsey Hussle with Lauren London, Source: NBC News: Rapper Nipsey Hussle killed in shooting outside his L.A. store (2019))



(Figure 5.2 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle together his Lauren London and their children with a caption she posted on her Instagram. USA TODAY: Nipsey Hussle Shooting Suspect Arrested (2019))



(Figure 5.3 Illustrates Nipsey Hussle with Lauren London at the Grammys. Source: ABC News: Grammy Nominated Rapper Nipsey Hussle killed in shooting (2019))

Overall, mainstream news presented many groups paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. Mainstream media used Los Angeles residents creating memorials to mourn Nipsey Hussle. Stories were able to use celebrities showing condolences and remembering past encounters to establish Nipsey Hussle's innocence. Furthermore, the way media presented public officials speaking on the accomplishments and loss of Nipsey Hussle influences the audience to see that all rappers do not cause harm to the community. From these elements, stories use these groups to present Nipsey's death as a loss to both Los Angeles and the world of celebrities. By attaching Nipsey Hussle to such concepts, sympathy and innocence is attached to his character and the stereotypes associated with African Americans are not exposed to mainstream viewers.

Alternative Media

When examining the presentation of African American victims and celebrities, alternative outlets will often feature claims-makers making positive remarks for the Black victim (Jackson, 2014 & Peterson, 2011). As mentioned in the literature review, alternative media outlets understand the racist and distorted portrayals of African Americans in mainstream media (Jackson, 2014). With alternative media sources understanding the racist rhetoric of mainstream media, claims-makers will come from an African American background or the same community as the people they are discussing. Rather than tarnish an African American homicide victim and show the community condemning them, the African American community and its representatives are more likely to be seen grieving, remembering past encounters, and paying tribute to the person. Alternative media tries to portray African Americans in a manner that is true to the African American community while offering humanistic coverage (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995).

Crenshaw Residents

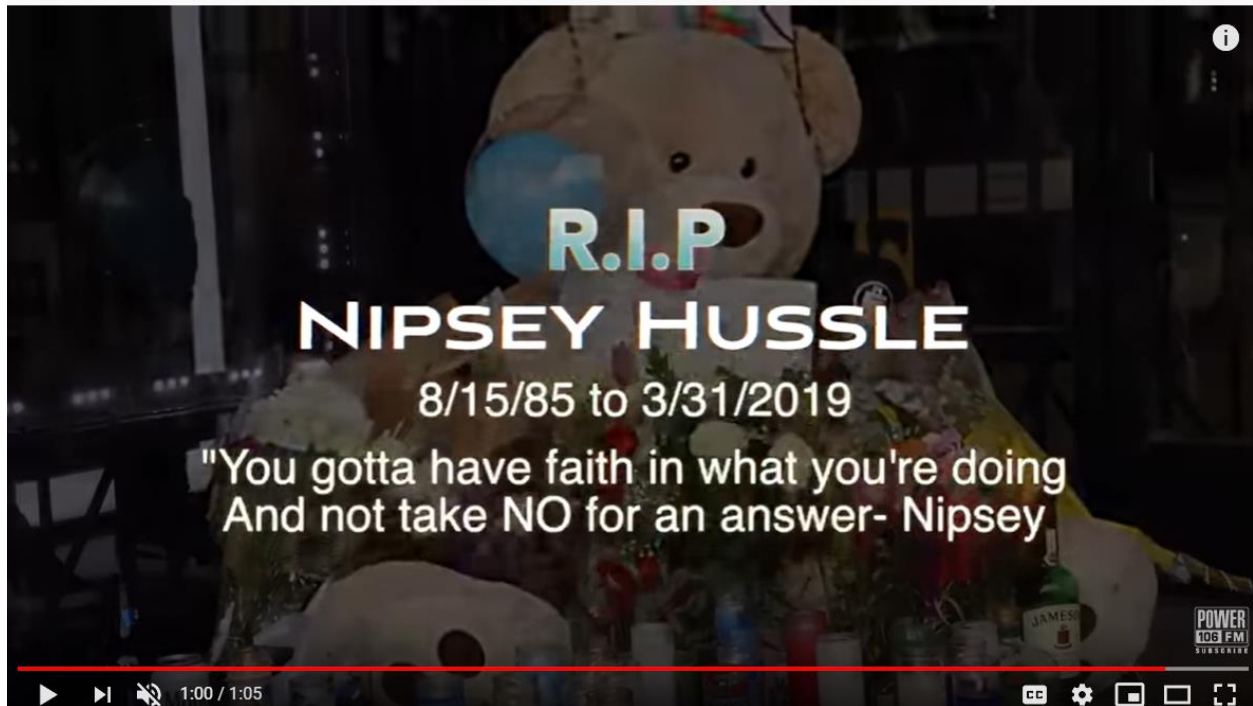
An outpour of sympathy in the Crenshaw and Slauson area was seen in pop-culture outlets. Several articles focused on members of the Crenshaw and Slauson community paying respects. Pop-culture stories contained photos of candlelight vigils, people embracing one another, crying, creating makeshift signs that memorialized Nipsey Hussle, and gathering in front of the store Nipsey Hussle was killed at (illustrated in figures 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 below). In addition to these images, stories contained statements of residents saying “Damnn... They took Nipsey? I don’t know how Crenshaw can recover after this” (The Source, 2019) and “It doesn’t make sense that somebody in this area did that to him... He made something work in an area that was run-down.... What’s going to happen now here?” (Complex, 2019). Such images and claims strengthen the sympathetic portrayal seen with alternative media outlets and African Americans. In alternative media, Black press will include images of community members crying, embracing one another, the crime scene, and photos of the victim to create a sympathetic portrayal of African American victims (Callanan, 2012). The visuals in figures 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 reflect such ideas and create sympathy for Nipsey Hussle. Through using visual and verbal claims of the Crenshaw community mourning Nipsey Hussle, pop-culture stories frame Nipsey Hussle’s death as a loss to the Crenshaw community. The images and statements show how a predominantly African American community is recognizing the loss of one of their own. The visual and verbal claims coming from the Crenshaw community support the standards to which alternative media frame African American homicide victims and their community’s response.



(Figure 7.1 Illustrates Crenshaw residents paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle, Source Complex: The Life and Times of Nipsey Hussle (2019))



(Figure 7.2 Illustrates a graffiti heart that say RIP NH, Source Power 106 Los Angeles: LA Remembers Nipsey Hussle at Marathon Store (2019)).



(Figure 7.3 illustrates memorial made for Nipsey Hussle. Source Power 106 Los Angeles: LA Remembers Nipsey Hussle at Marathon Store (2019)).

Celebrities

When examining how pop-culture outlets covered Nipsey Hussle, many stories used statements from African American celebrities. From the sources collected there was a reported fifty-four instances of African American celebrities speaking about Nipsey Hussle. Celebrities ranging from YG, Lauren London, Diddy, Drake, Chance the Rapper, Pharrell Williams, 21 Savage, Asap Rocky, Gucci Mane, and J. Cole were shown paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. Pop-culture stories contained tweets and social media posts made by these celebrities to detail the type of person Nipsey Hussle was. In most 80% of the statements seen in articles and videos, pop-culture outlets showed social media posts from prominent hip-hop artists.

Whether it was Asap Rocky tweet,

“MY HEART GOES OUT TO NIP N HIS FAM MAN , THIS MAN WAS ON THE RIGHT PATH AND DOING BETTER IN LIFE , N NIGGAS DO THIS EVIL SHIT, THIS GAME IS SO SHADY ITS DISGUSTING, RIP TO ONE OF THE ONLY REAL ONES LEFT @NipseyHussle” (Complex, 2019).

Pharrell Williams making the tweet:

“You were about something..positive and for your community in every chance you had to speak..and because of that You inspired millions..millions who will uphold your legacy forever. rest amongst the stars” (XXL, 2019)

Or how J Cole tweeted:

“Nipsey you a legend. I respect and admire your career path and what you did for the neighborhood. My heart broke today when I saw the news. I’m praying for your loved ones. This was sposed to be the year we got one in. God had bigger plans for you” (XXL, 2019).

Through these quotes, pop-culture stories create a sympathetic portrayal of Nipsey Hussle. From the verbal claims used, pop-culture stories are framing Nipsey Hussle’s death as a loss for the hip-hop community. Similar to how pop-culture stories used Crenshaw residents to frame Nipsey’s death as a loss for their community, the same can be seen with rappers. Pop-culture outlets are humanizing Nipsey Hussle by using multiple African American rappers admiring him and speaking out about the loss. Since pop-culture platforms are in tune with celebrities, fashion, music, and entertainment more than mainstream outlets and are known to give sympathy portrayals on individuals they are covering, their stories hold more merit in the rap community (Jönsson & Örnebring 2011; Rutherford 2001). By having pop-culture platforms

that previously covered Nipsey Hussle use the quotes of African American rappers to speak well on his behalf, Nipsey Hussle is presented sympathetically.

Overall, pop-culture news has both African American celebrities and Crenshaw residents paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. Pop-culture stories used African American Crenshaw residents to frame Nipsey Hussle's death as a loss to the Crenshaw community. By using images and statements of residents paying tribute, pop-culture stories uphold the sympathetic presentation of an African American victim. In addition to using Crenshaw residents, media outlets were able to use African American rappers to present Nipsey Hussle's death as a loss in the world of rap. Through such ideas, pop-culture media use representative of the world Nipsey Hussle was a part of to positively represent him

Conclusion

Both alternative and mainstream media had claims-makers speaking positively on Nipsey Hussle's behalf. Despite mainstream news and pop-culture outlets positively presenting Nipsey Hussle, the way they went about it was very different. Mainstream news went against the typical depictions seen with African Americans. Through positively portraying Nipsey Hussle and acknowledging what he meant to the communities he was apart of; mainstream stories were found to present Nipsey's death as a loss for the Los Angeles community and a loss amongst the celebrity world. Such ideas in mainstream media go against the standard presentation of African Americans and rappers and show a different perspective to which a rapper can be seen. However, pop-culture outlets stayed true to positive depictions associated with African Americans and African American celebrities. Stories were able to use the Crenshaw community to create a sympathetic presentation of Nipsey Hussle. In addition to using the Crenshaw community, media

was able to use rap's representatives to relay how Nipsey Hussle's death was a loss for the rap world to positively portray him.

Chapter 7

Discussion

In summary, the purpose of this study was to examine media's coverage of an African American rapper through a Social Constructionist lens. By using a Social Constructionist lens and a qualitative comparative analysis, I intended on contrasting alternative outlets with mainstream outlets to answer the following 3 questions:

1. How was the death of a hip-hop artist portrayed in mainstream and pop-culture media formats?
2. Is the negative stigma surrounding hip-hop artists present with Nipsey Hussle?
3. Who are the claims-makers and what type of information they are using to describe Nipsey Hussle?

Given that this research was one of the first to study a high-profile rapper's death since Tupac and Biggie Smalls, I believe that this study makes valuable contributions towards the field Criminology.

Based on my examination of mainstream and alternative outlets, stories would align with past studies and show new perspectives. Pop-culture outlets contained stories that aligned with Black press and their depictions of African Americans and rappers, while offering new ways to report on them. Stories presented Nipsey Hussle in a manner that appeared sympathetic to viewers. Rather than focusing only on his gang affiliations and music, stories used images and quotes to create an encompassing depiction of Nipsey Hussle in his community and amongst others. Similar ideas were amongst mainstream news stories and their presentation of Nipsey Hussle. Mainstream news tended to align with their standard depictions of African Americans and rappers and go against it in other instances. Stories would both emphasize Nipsey's gang and

criminal associations to the audience but go against it in discussing his community and tributes made. The following chapter will summarize these findings in connection with the research questions I raised earlier in the study. It will then lead to a discussion about the limitations seen within my own study and where future research in the field can go to.

Research Question 1: How Was the Death of a Hip-Hop Artist Portrayed in Mainstream and Pop- Culture Media Formats?

Mainstream Media

In order to analyze how media mainstream and pop-culture media depicted Nipsey Hussle, I chose to analyze the gang theme in stories. From my findings, mainstream news consistently connected Nipsey Hussle with the Rollin 60's Crips. By mentioning how Nipsey Hussle was a member of a prominent street gang, mainstream outlets continue to uphold the negative portrayal of an African American homicide victim. When mainstream news stories associate Nipsey Hussle with a criminal group, they reinforce the idea that African Americans cannot be innocent and truly seen as a victim (Dixon & Casas, 2003). In addition to claiming that Nipsey Hussle was in a gang, the way mainstream news covered his death reaffirms the negative portrayal of African Americans. Often the standard homicide script with African American victims sensationalizes them getting into a personal dispute with gang members (Wright & Washington, 2019; Dukes & Gaither, 2018). In the case of the Nipsey Hussle, mainstream stories claim that Nipsey's death stemmed from a personal dispute he had with a Rollin 60's gang member, implicitly associating Nipsey Hussle's death with gang activities despite the public renouncement of his past connections (Dukes & Gaither, 2018). In these instances, stories deny African Americans of their victimhood by highlighting their participation in deviance and making them less "worthy" of the victim status (Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013), and

making coverage attribute some responsibility onto the victim for his death and reifies socially entrenched notions of Black criminality

The content seen in mainstream news stories contributed towards the “othering” of African Americans. According to the work of Smiley (2016), when media constantly associates African Americans in gangs, they actively assign them into a deviant subgroup. When stories claim that people are apart of a non-socially acceptable group, they are taking place in “othering”. In terms of my study, such ideas are reinforced when mainstream stories fail to denounce the event as being gang-related and connect Nipsey Hussle to the issue of gangs in Los Angeles. Through these findings, mainstream stories are implying to the audience that Nipsey Hussle was detached from what’s considered socially and culturally acceptable in society. As a result, mainstream stories use Nipsey Hussle to enhance the “folk devil” status and overall violent culture that is associated with African Americans. Such ideas further support the moral panic associated with Blackness and criminality (Crichlow & Lauricella, 2018; Foreman, Arteaga & Collins, 2016).

Alternative Media

Contrasting mainstream coverage of the Nipsey Hussle case, I observed that alternative media upheld different ideas. When pop-culture stories discussed Nipsey Hussle with his gang associations, they offered a more uplifting approach. Rather than focus on the gang identity of an African American victim, pop-culture outlets would discuss Nipsey Hussle’s leadership in the community, his philanthropic contributions, and his championing of exit strategies for gang members extending from his own experiences. In a general context, Nipsey Hussle’s gang identity was not the focus of alternative media stories. Such ideas reinforce what Irene, Deckard, and Rodriguez (2016) have found in alternative media outlets. By mentioning his gang

associations in relation to the many things he was doing or promoting, pop-culture media creates a rounded representation of Nipsey Hussle. In death, Nipsey Hussle's past mistakes were minimized and his contributions celebrated, reflecting common themes encountered in academic studies of media surrounding deceased hip hop artists (Combs, 2014). The selected presentation of Nipsey Hussle affects the viewer's opinion regarding Nipsey Hussle. From these stories, Nipsey Hussle is seen as much more as a rapper or former gang member. The audience of pop-culture outlets are now meant to believe that the death of Nipsey Hussle was a loss of an individual who helped out his community. Through examining Nipsey Hussle, the way that pop-culture sources did not criticize his gang ties supports how alternative media facilitated a positive depiction of a dead rapper.

Research Question 2: Is the Negative Stigma Surrounding Hip-Hop Artists Present with Nipsey Hussle?

Mainstream and Alternative media

Mainstream news has often used thematic frames to negatively portray a rapper. In stories covering a rapper, mainstream news reports beyond the incident to show rappers inciting violence, deviant behavior, or upholding black urban street life to others (Aquil, 2018 and Cochran, 2015). Although rappers are known to do this, mainstream and pop-culture stories had no example of Nipsey Hussle inciting violence or a deviant lifestyle to others. Mainstream and alternative stories selectively covered Nipsey Hussle's community involvement show to their audience that rappers and African Americans can do something positive for their community. Both mainstream and alternative outlets discussed initiatives that Nipsey Hussle was doing for his community. Whether it was mainstream and pop-culture news stating that he helped African Americans realize that they can be great, describing the individual initiatives he did to help others, and acknowledging the many programs he implemented in his community, Nipsey Hussle

was presented as being a positive influence for his community audience. With mainstream and alternative news focusing on Nipsey Hussle's success, such findings go against the violent and deviant attitudes that rappers are said to promote to their audience. Ultimately, the community activist side of Nipsey Hussle played a significant role in both mainstream and alternative media. These findings bring a different perspective for mainstream and alternative media. Often when a rapper dies, mainstream and alternative media outlets will only mention their musical accomplishments (Combs, 2014 & Rutherford, 2001). By recognizing what Nipsey Hussle was able to do for his community, it creates different avenues to which a rapper can be talked about in mainstream and alternative audiences. Overall, mainstream news and pop-culture outlets did not uphold the negative stigma in rappers with Nipsey Hussle.

Research question 3: Who Are the Claims-Makers and What Type of Information They Are Using to Describe Nipsey Hussle?

Mainstream Media

After analyzing many sources, three types of claims-makers were seen in mainstream stories. Major news outlets relied on Los Angeles residents, African American celebrities, and public officials to describe Nipsey Hussle. As mentioned in the literature review, claims-makers in mainstream outlets typically do not represent the interest of the Black community to their audience (Entman, 1992 & Entman, 1994). Claims-makers are known to use visual and verbal claims to reinforce unempathetic representations of rappers and African Americans (Diarra, 2013). Although mainstream news would show claims-makers making claims to reinforce criminality onto African Americans and rappers, that was not the case in this study. Instead of community members and public officials demonizing an African American rapper, residents from the Los Angeles community, Los Angeles' mayor, and Police Chief were seen sympathizing and paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. Mainstream news would use these claims-

makers to present Nipsey Hussle's death as a loss for the Los Angeles community. Whether it was major news outlets showing Los Angeles residents creating memorials or Mayor Eric Garcetti honoring what Nipsey Hussle had done for his community, claims-makers were honoring his legacy and acknowledging the positive deeds that Nipsey Hussle had done. Rather than using the Los Angeles community to blame Nipsey Hussle for his death or use politicians to claim he was a brute; mainstream stories went against these notions. Such ideas have not been documented with an African American in mainstream outlets. In most instances, claims-makers will use verbal and visual claims to problematize African Americans and rappers to their audience (Duke & Gaither 2018; Gruenewald, Chermak, & Pizarro, 2013; Wright & Washington, 2018). However, the images and statements seen in my study create and reinforce positive representations of a deceased rapper.

Similar ideas are present when it came to tributes celebrities made. African American celebrities were actively mourning and remembering past encounters they had with Nipsey Hussle. Whether it was Russell Westbrook, LeBron James, Issa Rae, Van Jones, Drake, YG, Rihanna, Diddy, Lauren London, Nas, Big Boy, Chance the Rapper, and Beyoncé. These claims create sympathetic portrayals of Nipsey Hussle. Media in this case study used celebrities to show how Nipsey Hussle's death was a loss for the world of celebrities. Past studies with celebrities and African American victims have only shown celebrities speaking at times of racial injustices (Fayne 2019; Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). When speaking in moments of racial injustice, celebrities do not reflect on past experiences they held with the victim or establish a victim's innocence in mainstream media (Pollak & Kubrin, 2007). However, with mainstream stories demonstrating how celebrities are mourning and remembering past encounters with Nipsey Hussle, media are essentially upholding the victim's innocence by connecting him to the world of celebrities.

Alternative Media

Articles and videos showed Crenshaw residents paying tribute to Nipsey Hussle. When compared to mainstream news, pop-culture outlets took a different approach to covering tributes. When it came to mainstream outlets, stories used the tributes to represent Nipsey Hussle's death as a loss to the Los Angeles community, while pop-culture outlets present the tributes as a loss for the Crenshaw community. Similar to how Black press frame stories to represent a certain demographic and cover issues through their perspective, pop-culture outlets did so as well. By using the tributes of Crenshaw residents to represent their loss, pop-culture stories represented a certain demographic within Los Angeles, framed their stories to represent their loss, and bring sympathy towards the death of Nipsey Hussle. Although mainstream outlets framed the story as a loss for the Los Angeles community, they did not frame stories to show how Crenshaw residents were specifically processing it. Furthermore, analyzing tributes and memorials made by Crenshaw residents shows how alternative sources support the positive presentation of a deceased rapper. Stories from pop-culture outlets upheld the same ideas seen with alternative outlets and how they depict African American victims. Stories involving African American victims often contain visuals or statements of their community grieving or mourning them to incorporate an empathetic perspective (Petersen, 2011). When residents from the Crenshaw and Slauson area were grieving and remembering Nipsey Hussle, such things create a humanistic and empathetic presentation. Overall, the way media framed Crenshaw's loss positively represented Nipsey Hussle.

Many of the celebrities seen in mainstream outlets were present in pop-culture stories. Whether it was Drake, Rihanna, Lauren London, LeBron James, Steph Curry, Diddy, and Chance the Rapper, celebrities in mainstream and alternative sources overlapped with one another. Although mainstream and pop-culture stories contained many of the same celebrity statements,

tweets and Instagram posts from African American rappers were shown at a higher frequency. Whether it was Casanova, Asap Rocky, YG, Gucci Mane, Ludacris, Meek Mill, and Drake, rappers were seen addressing the murder of Nipsey Hussle more than other actors, actresses, NBA player involved. Since most of these platforms focus on covering rap and its artists, it is easy to understand why African American rappers were more prevalent in their stories. Pop-culture stories would have African American rappers admiring what Nipsey Hussle was able to accomplish and showed them remembering encounters that they had with him. Through doing so media was able to frame the story as a loss for the rap community and create a sympathetic depiction of Nipsey Hussle. By using African American rappers to speak out on a member of the Black and rap community, alternative media outlets attempt to humanize and deliver a more realistic coverage of Nipsey Hussle (Oliver & Shapiro, 1995; Williams, 2019).

Limitations

After considering what my study has done, limitations should be acknowledged. With the use of a purposive sampling approach, the potential for bias can be seen in the way I collected and interpreted my sources (Phillips & Strobl, 2006). Since my study was restricted to certain search parameters I created, I could have limited my sample size and the information I collected. By focusing only on pop-culture outlets that have covered Nipsey Hussle before, I potentially missed out on different perspectives and media outlets. Furthermore, by examining only the first week of coverage I cut myself off from new stories, themes, and ideas that could have emerged if I kept collecting till sources were exhausted. Overall, my sources are not a clear representation of the entire sample of stories covering Nipsey Hussle (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007).

In addition to limiting the sources I collected, I could have affected the data. When analyzing mainstream and alternative sources, “my personal history, class, education, sex and

race could have potentially limited or biased the coding and theorizing stages” (Henry, 2018, p. 88). Since I am a fan of rap music and I knew a lot about Nipsey Hussle, this could potentially have influenced my results. By having my codes and analysis based on my subjective interpretations, the findings become hard to generalize to every rapper portrayed in the media.

Future research

Future research is recommended when it comes to Criminology, hip-hop, and the media. It would be very beneficial for future studies to examine all stories covering a rapper after they pass to determine how they are portrayed in the media. By covering all stories associated with a deceased rapper, it could lead to the discovery of new ideas and frames in mainstream and alternative media. Researchers should take a blind approach when analyzing hip-hop artists. Since this study was influenced by underlining theories and past studies, only certain aspects were examined. In taking a blind approach, it could allow future researchers to discover new and emerging themes from all the data they collected. Lastly, more rappers and their actions outside of music should be examined. With hip-hop artists receiving more coverage in the media, it opens new research areas for criminologists.

Conclusion

Overall, my thesis contributes to literature covering media's depiction of African Americans and rappers. Through conducting a qualitative comparative analysis of mainstream and alternative outlets in relation to the death of a hip-hop artist, I provided a perspective that was not seen in Criminological literature. Since rappers are primarily seen and studied through a negative lens, rappers and rap have been systemically excluded in Criminological literature. I believe this study addresses such gaps by examining media coverage surrounding Nipsey Hussle. Through examining the case of Nipsey Hussle, I made advancements by contrasting sympathetic alternative outlets with mainstream outlets. Comparing and contrasting mainstream and alternative source provides unique insight regarding the way rappers and African American victims are depicted. Upon reviewing how mainstream and alternative outlets have portrayed Nipsey Hussle, my study reinforces past ideas on ways African Americans and rappers are depicted to their audience while offering new perspectives.

Mainstream outlets were shown to structure stories that heightened Nipsey Hussle's gang identity. Whether it was focusing on his gang affiliations, structuring a story similar to how a gang member would be depicted, or connecting to Nipsey Hussle to the issue of gang violence, the negative presentation of African Americans in mainstream outlets was seen in this study. While mainstream outlets focused on the gang affiliations of Nipsey, pop-culture stories did not. Pop-culture outlets often attempted to discredit the gang narrative at the time of Nipsey Hussle's death while upholding the objective and humanistic presentation of African Americans identified in academic literature.

While mainstream and pop-culture outlets supported different depictions in relation to how an African American is depicted, their coverage of Nipsey was similar to how past studies

have depicted a dead rapper. Instead of mainstream and alternative outlets discussing a rapper's impact on music, both outlets decided to cover the many initiatives he was doing for his community and how others viewed him. Mainstream and pop-culture sources were able to highlight many actions that Nipsey Hussle performed in the community, the programs he implemented, and how he overall affected the community. In addition to focusing on the many actions he did for others, both types of media outlets were able to detail how others were speaking about him Nipsey Hussle and the actions they were doing to remember him. Through discussing Nipsey's contributions to his community and presenting it as a loss amongst celebrities, rappers, the Los Angeles community, and the Crenshaw community, mainstream and pop-culture outlets support the notion that dead rappers are positively depicted when they covered in media.

Finally, the examination of Nipsey Hussle's death makes a positive impact on the presentations of African Americans in media. Following the rise of BLM and African American scholars, this study addresses undue tropes about the systemic and heteronormative tropes applied to African American men. Rather than solely focus on Nipsey Hussle's gang background, this study was able to highlight many contributions that he was able to do for Los Angeles, Crenshaw, and the African American community. In addition to focusing on his community deeds, this study was able to show claims makers in mainstream and alternative media speaking positively on his behalf. With these findings, the study of Nipsey Hussle provides another step into the dismantling of anti-black racism.

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